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ABSTRACT

Commemorating the end of George Orwell's year, 1984, the majority of articles in this journal issue are devoted to some aspect of language. The first article alerts teachers to the need for a critical examination of Orwell's underlying assumptions about language change in "Politics and the English Language." The next five articles deal with aspects of language in relation to the novel "1984," and all offer practical and helpful suggestions for raising student awareness of political uses of language (distortions of logic, verbal deceptions, use of doublespeak, and so on). An article from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills dealing with vocabulary is included for its value to language arts teachers in the elementary school. The sixth article deals with the autobiographical aspects of "Down and Out in Paris and London," and the remaining two articles discuss the literary heritage of the state of Illinois. (HTH)

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ORWELL AND LANGUAGE STUDY

ILLINOIS
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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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ORWELL AND LANGUAGE STUDY

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"The Politics of Teaching Orwell's 'Politics and the English Language'"
by Stephen A. Bernhardt

p. 2, 9 lines up: "understood" should read "underscored"
p. 3, Line 11: "thse" should read "those"
Line 23: "simple" should read "simply"
p. 4, Line 11: (omission) "causes of language are" should read "causes of language change are"
p. 5, Line 1: "the bad advice" should read "the best advice"
p. 6, 19 lines up: (omission) "use will utimately be a matter" should read "use will ultimately not be a matter"

"What's Left To Be Rediscovered?" by Robert Bray

p. 53, Line 5: "1857" should read "1856"
p. 54, Line 6: "as done" should read "has done"
Line 13: "1970" should read "1870"
9 lines up: "horses' mouth" should read "horse's mouth"
p. 55, Line 4: "1930s" should read "1830s"
Line 6: "Dennis Camps's" should read "Dennis Camp's"
Line 11: "so popular received" should read "so popularly received"
Line 14: "1946" should read "1846"
p. 56, Line 10: "A True Picture" should read "A True Picture" (italicized)
Line 12: "respectfully" should read "respectively"
4 lines up: "agragarian" should read "agrarian"
2 lines up: "prarie" should read "prairie"

"Poets and Suckers" by James Hurt

p. 43, 4 lines up: (omission) "in dedication ceremonies:" should read "in the dedication ceremonies:"
p. 46, Line 16: (omission) "returned to England to see him" should read "returned to England to settle his affairs there and recruit emigrants. When he returned to Illinois a year later, Birkbeck refused to see him"
p. 46, Lines 21 and 26: "prairie" should be "Prairie"
p. 47, Line 4: "liberal" should read "literal"
Line 20: "Renaissance," should read "Renaissance."
p. 50, Line 6: "had too much" should read "has much"

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue commemorates the end of Orwell's year, 1984, with the majority of articles being devoted to some aspect of language.

Since Orwell's essay, "Politics and the English Language," is such a classic—it is a constant in freshman rhetoric readers—Stephen Bernhardt's opening article is especially relevant; he alerts teachers to the need for a critical examination of Orwell's underlying assumptions about language change. He also warns against a naive application of Orwell's six stylistic rules which, to be valid advice, must be placed within defined contexts of use. The next five articles all deal with aspects of language in relation to the novel *1984*, and all offer practical and helpful suggestions for raising student awareness of the political uses of language (distortions of logic, verbal deceptions, use of doublespeak, etc.). Since the contributors come from the high school, community college and university levels, there is good variety in the approaches. The ERIC article on vocabulary has been included for its value to language arts teachers in the elementary school. The final Orwell article, dealing with autobiographical aspects of *Down and Out in Paris and London*, is only tangentially about language but was included for the insight it provides through an analysis of a comparatively little known Orwell work.

I wish to thank Sue Howell for her special assistance in encouraging a response to the call for manuscripts about Orwell.

In keeping with this publication's policy of disseminating important information about the literature of Illinois, the speeches of Professors James Hurt and Robert Bray, delivered at the first Illinois Literary Heritage Conference, are offered as a special feature.

Dorothy Matthews
Editor

The Politics of Teaching Orwell's "Politics and the English Language"

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No other statement on English usage is so well known or so frequently taught, at least at the college level, as George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language." If it were taught critically, with its assumptions thoroughly examined, as Orwell himself might encourage, the study of the essay surely would be profitable. Too often, though, Orwell's assumptions are accepted without question, an easy enough posture when reading a widely known statement from a highly influential writer. Teachers nod in approval as Orwell condemns the lazy patterns of language use which in his analysis are both consequence and cause of similarly lazy or dishonest patterns of thought.

The difficulty with this posture, as I see it, is twofold. Orwell's essay is predicated on misleading and faulty assumptions about language change, assumptions which contradict well established, basic tenets of linguistic thought. More central to my concerns, however, is that the recommendations which Orwell derives for practicing writers easily lead to bad teaching.

Orwell is neither linguist nor writing teacher: he is a great thinker and writer who has ideas about language and usage. When he writes in the first paragraph that "Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way" or in the second paragraph about "the decline of language," he is echoing popular but misguided judgments about language. His judgments are direct antecedents to those of current popularizers who decry our "literary crisis." The problem is that the decline or crisis has never been adequately documented (and, in fact, could not be), but rather assumed and then understood with anecdotal evidence or by reference to such arbitrary measures as declines in standardized test scores, which, while documented, have little to do with the English language and a lot to do with schooling and society. Orwell's five short pieces from contemporary writers are just the sort of arbitrarily selected, anecdotal evidence which informs most arguments about the demise of the English language. I do not have space here to show in detail why it is mistaken to assume the language is in decline; fortunately, the argument has been developed elsewhere. (For a

thoroughly competent, detailed analysis, see Harvey Daniels' *Famous Last Words: The American Language Crisis Reconsidered*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.)

Certainly the English language, like all living languages, constantly changes. But change is not necessarily decline. The English language is flourishing, being spoken and written all over the world by increasing numbers of people in diverse situations for every imaginable purpose. Especially in scientific and technical fields, the vocabulary is developing at an astounding rate. Syntax and discourse structures, too, are changing and developing to meet the needs of thse who use the language. Like all languages, English is adequate to the needs of those who use it and constantly changing to meet new needs. These changes are often mistaken for decline by those who nostalgically feel change is necessarily bad or who feel usages other than their own are to be condemned. In every society, there have been critics who believe that people neither write nor speak as they ought nor as well as they once did, just as there are those who believe that young people have never been so disrespectful or irresponsible. But these comfortable folk myths, which make such good copy for weekly news magazines and book clubs, should not be mistaken for truths about language or society.

Orwell never really substatiates his claim about the decline of the language, but simple assumes it and then argues toward certain actions. At the center of his discussion is the assumption that the users of a language can consciously improve language. Orwell would be on safe ground here if he meant simply that one can choose to change one's own language patterns in desirable directions. But Orwell has larger goals: actually influencing the practice of the community by attempting to bring usage in line with one's idiosyncratic preferences. *The Chicago Tribune* found out how resistant the language was to imposed changes several years ago when it attempted to foster its own notions of "improved" spellings such as *thru* and *tonite*. *The Tribune* abandoned its efforts when it recognized the futility of trying to get others to adopt their spellings, even though they believed the spellings to be more logical and simpler than existing conventions. *The Tribune* had not reckoned with the strong tendency of the language to conserve spelling while allowing for diversity and change in pronunciation.

George Bernard Shaw was another brilliant thinker who, like Orwell, assumed that the language could be shaped intentionally by well-meaning, "logical" reformers. But the money Shaw put aside as a reward for the person who successfully reformed English spelling patterns is still in the account and growing through compounded interest. A most convincing argument demonstrating the futility of conscious attempts to change linguistic practice arises in the context

of Orwell's own essay. "Silly words and expressions have often disappeared," Orwell writes, "not through evolutionary process but owing to the conscious action of a minority. Two recent examples were *explore every avenue* and *leave no stone unturned*, which were killed by the jeers of a few journalists." If these phrases were killed by journalistic jeers, then we have strong evidence for reincarnation, for both are alive and well today, some thirty-five years after Orwell wrote their obituary.

Orwell's essay could provide a context for discussion of language: why it changes, how it changes, how it has changed historically, what the social and political causes of language are, and why people hold the linguistic prejudices they do. These questions are important and fit well with discussions of Orwell's other ideas about language, especially those in *1984*. Good answers to the questions will not, however, be found in "Politics and the English Language," and the teacher would need some background in language study to develop positions which are more in accord with the facts of language change. Many teachers, I fear, slide easily over these broad assumptions about language use in their haste to get to the specifics, the stylistic advice which Orwell offers in six, simply codified rules.

It is these rules, naively applied, which I fear can lead to bad teaching. If one has in mind, as I suspect Orwell does, such writing as reflective essays, personal narratives, or general exposition for a lay audience, the rules will serve readily enough. It is probably a good idea, in general, to avoid passives, to prefer short words to long, and to use fresh figures of speech. But each of his rules, which are stated categorically, can be inappropriate for certain writing situations. Passive constructions, for example, occur with some frequency in technical, scientific and business writing, and for good reasons. *What* was done, observed, or ordered is often far more important than *who* did, saw, or ordered. In these circumstances, the passive allows a writer to place in the opening, subject position of the sentence the important, topical information. Rather than an all purpose rule such as "Never use the passive where you can use the active," students need to gain some sense of when the passive might be useful and why the active voice is usually to be preferred for its clarity and force. Most students already have too many categorical stylistic principles rumbling around in their heads, often in a confused state. They remember the teacher who told them never to use *you* or never to use *I*, though they are typically unable to offer any sound reasons for these words being taboo. Some students overgeneralize the rules, coming to believe with some confusion that all pronouns are to be avoided in formal writing, a rule which can produce indescribably contorted prose. The language is too subtle and its situations of use too varied to succumb to easy generalizations qualified by

always or *never*. In a writing classroom, the bad advice – though not satisfying to students who seek "yes or no" answers to complex questions – is often "It depends."

A second objection to Orwell's stylistic principles is that they might be more appropriate for mature writers than for students who are learning to write. Older writers are the ones who tend to write long, complicated sentences full of multisyllabic words and obscure syntax. Students tend to write short sentences with limited vocabulary. We would like students to be willing to take risks, to stretch their prose styles rather than stifle their stylistic intuitions by playing it safe. Orwell's advice to "Never use a long word where a short one will do" runs counter to the goal of encouraging students to explore the possibilites the language affords. Isn't it better that students try their hand with vocabulary which is a little beyond them than that they stay with monosyllabic words which are familiar and comfortable? Certainly, in their attempts to exercise new and unfamiliar diction, the students will write prose that sometimes appears inflated, bloated, or pompous, and they will often choose words based on sound or on vague but incorrect assumptions about how the new words fit into sentences. This seems to me an important stage in their learning. It is fun to play with words, it is instructive to make mistakes, and it is right, especially for students, to risk long words only dimly understood.

A similar critique can be applied to another of Orwell's stylistic rules: "Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print." The difficulty is that many of our students are not used to seeing print at all, and consequently have a difficult time distinguishing fresh from stale figures. One teacher's cliché is another student's witty, original phrasing. With years of print-oriented experience, teachers can easily recognize (their own personal list of) overused expressions or dead metaphors. Students, on the other hand, are only beginning to get some sense of what is new and what is abused. Teachers can tell students a metaphor is stale or red pencil an overworked simile, but they cannot hand over to students wholesale the familiarity with print which informs teacherly judgments. For students, such stylistic advice again runs counter to the atmosphere which should prevail in a writing class, an atmosphere shaped by a willingness to take chances with the language.

Orwell's rule forbidding figures which have appeared in print also neglects the fact that overworked metaphors are a kind of cultural code which informs much of our humor. Is a stale metaphor still stale if offered in a wry or mocking tone? Why is it the culture embraces certain overworked metaphors, investing them with significance far beyond the simple evocation of an image? When school children and

adults alike begin parroting catch phrases such as "Where's the beef?" or in another day, "Here comes the judge," it should remind us that certain formulary incantations have a power which is not captured by notions of freshness of imagery, but rather by repetition in constantly shifting contexts. It would be a mistake to deny students the option of using those figures which speak to them, in contexts of their own devising, whether or not a more mature writer or teacher may deem such figures overworked or stale.

In the last analysis, Orwell's stylistic principles are not simply misguided but beside the point. What do these surface feature rules have to do with the underlying argument concerning dangerous political lies and the manipulation of language by those with power? The six little rules do not equip students for understanding the uses of propaganda or the rhetoric by means of which the state seeks to establish and maintain control over the individual. Such issues could form the basis for classroom study of the relations of power and knowledge to language within a class-structured society. But Orwell's prescriptions for word choice hardly resolve the underlying issues.

What is called for is a much broader based rhetorical analysis, which does not stop with individuals choosing words, but examines people with power making decisions which may or may not be in the best interests of individuals within a society. The analysis would need to consider such common, everyday rhetorical aims as deception, avoidance, manipulation, co-optation, and the continual creation and maintenance of class structures which favor those in power. Understanding the socio- and politico-linguistic forces which shape language use will ultimately be a matter of short words versus long, or jargon versus everyday words. It will entail difficult and abstract analyses of some very complex situations. Hoping these situations will simplify or disappear if individuals start choosing fresh words is a bit like the Miss Universe contestants all saying they hope to bring peace and freedom to the world during their reign if chosen to be Queen of the Universe. It is a dangerous lie to lead students to believe that the abuse of language by people in high places can be alleviated by individuals who decide to follow several simplistic stylistic principles.

Much better would be to explore the reasons why those in power, and indeed everyone, sometimes choose language which is deceptive, obscure, jargon ridden, or verbose, and why these uses of language are not likely to disappear. The stylistic principles can be left to another day, when they might be appropriately qualified by being placed within defined contexts of use. Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" offers a starting point for discussion of deceptive language; informed teachers and students will ultimately decide where the discussion leads.

Doublespeak: Finding the Author's Intention

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In recent years the phenomenon of doublespeak has become a particular concern to students and teachers of English, political science, linguistics, and sociology. The National Council of Teachers of English has even organized a study of doublespeak. There is an annual doublespeak award given to public figures who raise the art to new heights; yet teaching students about doublespeak can be filled with traps and problems.

George Orwell's concern about the relationship between politics and the English language is well known and well documented. As the source of our current thinking on doublespeak, Orwell's ideas deserve special comment. Orwell talked about "doublethink" and "newspeak." According to Orwell, doublethink is defined as:

> . . .the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. . . The process has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity and hence of guilt. **Doublethink** lies at the very heart of Ingsoc, since the essential act of the Party is to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complele honesty.[1]

Doublethink was the basic principle of morality of Orwell's totalitarian society. Its medium was "newspeak," which Orwell defines as having the function of not only providing "a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotee of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible."[2] Combining elements of both of Orwell's original terms results in "doublespeak." Doublespeak can also be defined as "deliberate attempts to deceive or mislead through the use of ambiguity, generalizations, of high level abstractions."[3] In stating its own views on doublespeak, the National Council of Teachers of English has censured the "dishonest and inhumane uses of language" by advertisers and politicians.[4]

No matter what definition of doublespeak is used, teaching the subject can be fraught with difficulties. In the first place, there is a widespread impression that teachers take examples of doublespeak only from a certain group or party to which they are opposed.[5] Thus academics have been publicly criticized by newspaper writers and public officials because they give a personal and doctrinaire slant to examples selected for instruction in doublespeak. Most often this criticism focuses on the opposition of many academics to the war in Vietnam or other kinds of military activites.[6] A second major problem involves overstatement on the part of many teachers about the necessity of avoiding aspects of doublespeak. Even in view of all the definitions mentioned above, it is virtually impossible to tell students to avoid ambiguity, generalizations, or high level abstractions.[7] All of those aspects of language have an essential and inextricable place in our general usage. The simple admonition to avoid these techniques would, if followed, be very likely to make students mute and schizophrenic.

In my opinion, many of the difficulties involving both of these major problems can be resolved if we focus on the first part of the second definition: "*deliberate* attempts to deceive or mislead. . ." As NCTE has emphasized, it is the "dishonest" use of language which makes doublespeak a major social problem. It is the matter of intention which distinguishes doublespeak from ordinary, proper (or simply unintentionally misleading) uses of the techniques involved.

For many teachers who were raised on "The Intentional Fallacy," by Wimsatt and Beardsley[8], giving such concentrated attention to intention in writing may pose some problems. Even recent articles such as Father Walter Ong's "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction"[9] suggest the major difficulties in attempting to determine precisely an author's intention. Yet the matter of intention is vital. Ambiguity is inseparable from the use of language as we know it. Multiple meaning, in fact, makes up one of the most interesting aspects of language studies and serves many useful purposes in day to day communication[10]. While there might be disagreement about the relative value of euphemism, it is clear that there are situations where euphemisms are absolutely necessary. Comparatively few people would tell Aunt Viola that they are going to drive her down to the funeral parlor so that she can talk to the undertaker about what to do with Uncle Willie's corpse. Most would be far more likely to drive her to the funeral home so that she can talk to the director about what to do with Uncle Willie (or with her "loved one"). We need these kinds of polite words, but when polite words are deliberately used to deceive or cheat others, then such language is doublespeak. Equal arguments can be advanced about generalizations and high level abstractions. Indeed, both the ability to generalize and to deal with

high level abstractions are part of the distinguishing characteristics of the human use of language.[11] The matter of deliberate intention then becomes the sole criterion by which we can actually judge doublespeak when we hear or read it.

Even though intention is very hard to measure, there are several techniques that can help to direct students' attention to concerns involving intention in discourse.[12] One of the first is to give them examples that refer to personal or individual intention. This can be done through a series of individually generated examples either from the class itself or, at least initially, presented by the instructor. Such examples might include contrasting statements and intentions, where the intention in the first item (the examples of doublespeak) can easily be inferred from the plain-language statement indicating what the author wants to do and intends to obscure in the statement itself. For instance students mights be asked to engage in "role-playing" in evaluating the following examples:

Have you ever said?

> *To your employees*—"Beginning this fiscal year, we intend to implement a program of plant stability through the gradual decontrol of current staff ceilings."
>
> *When you meant*—"Some of you are going to be laid off."
>
> *To your contituents*—"My stand on the current issue is dictated by forces countervailing those that you envision."
>
> *When you meant*—"You don't know all the facts."

Examples such as these can clearly help students to understand intention. It should be readily granted that such made-up examples are perhaps too easy.[13] Determining when one is hearing or reading doublespeak and when one is hearing or reading an appropriate use of euphemism in real life is sometimes much more difficult. These examples, which can be neutral or politically charged as the instructor decides, have the benefits of giving the students a clear introduction to the subject while also indicating some of the complexity that they must deal with in real life.

A second approach, but obviously one against which certain politicians and editors raged, is to select real examples from political and social discourse.[14] This, perhaps, is the alternative most often employed by teachers in the classroom, and it is especially tempting during an election year when it seems that examples of doublespeak abound. It is also the most dangerous, because easy or superficial judgments about the nature of doublespeak leave teachers open to the charge of political bias and also tend to obscure some of the com-

plexity of the subject for students. One of the best approaches to use in drawing examples from the public arena is to try to deal with those where intention seems clear cut: that is, where the language spoken and the act that followed or preceded seemed to be clearly at odds.

Certainly examples may be drawn from other languages, and sometimes those examples (even though teachers may feel most uncomfortable with them because of their own lack of knowledge of the original tongue) can be quite helpful in giving the students insight into the problem. For instance, students will have learned that, during World War II, the Axis powers spoke of themselves as "liberating" the towns and villages that they captured, even though the Allies felt that "liberation" meant something far different. It is easy to show that the results of such "liberating" activities on the part of the Axis powers had results that most modern Americans would certainly not conceive of as consistent with the term. Moreover, the Communist nations have long recognized the value of using honorific terms to obscure awful facts. How many People's Republics or better yet People's Democratic Republics (with virtually totalitarian governments) are Communist-block "re-education" centers. One can only wonder about the subject matter and the nature of the instructional methods used. Perhaps equally problematic are the co-called "national liberation movements" that have sprung up in several underdeveloped countries around the world. In some instances there is evidence that these movements have developed from within and have as their goal the liberation of their countrymen from oppressive governments. In others, these movements clearly suggest external influence. Finally, a more recent example can be drawn from Yasir Arafat who said, discussing the relationship between the PLO and Israelites: "It is precisely because we have been advocating co-existence that we have shed so much blood." Widespread examples of these sorts may be drawn from the language of most nations at most periods of time. They can be adapted to the classroom for individual student populations.

In the discussion of real examples, it is also, of course, appropriate to speak about examples of political doublespeak in the United States.[15] The "pacification program" carried on in Southeast Asia was somehow supposed to be different from the limited war of the sort that most historians now believed we conducted there. Probably one outstanding example of doublespeak was provided by a U.S. Air Force officer who, during the bombing of Cambodia, raged at a group of newsmen: "You always write it's bombing, bombing, bombing. It's air-support." Whether the victims of "air-support" feel any different from those of "bombing" is hard to tell. On the domestic front, anyone who has listened to the news lately has heard the phrase "supply-side economics." Exactly what does that mean? Some

of the recent flurry over David Stockman's remarks may lead the country to believe that not even the President and/or his advisors know for sure. Basically, "supply-side economics," as most people understand it, is a program of government fiscal control and development designed to enhance the climate for business and private investors. The reasons are obvious why the President could not call his program "big business economics." In the same way real life examples may be drawn from an individual's own conversations. Teachers can focus in on expressions such as "take it under advisement" and "enhance." "Take it under advisement" can often be shown to be an example of social or personal doublespeak expressing the desire to delay. "Enhance" can often be used to cover up the fact that the speaker intends to "modify abruptly" or even "destroy" the subject in question.

Examples from the business world can also be adduced. Probably one of the best was generated a few years ago by an executive from the Ford Motor Company. Questioned by newsmen about a recent recall of Ford cars, he was finally asked about the danger that might develop for those owners who did not bring their cars back to the shop. His response was: "Continued driving with the failed bearing could adversely affect the vehicle control." The major share of blame in this sentence seems to fall on the bearing—it is, after all the "failed" part. There may be an additional implication of owner responsibility in the phrase "continued driving." Who after all would be stupid enough to drive a vehicle with a failed bearing? And if somebody were that stupid, wouldn't the person deserve what's coming to him? When it is considered that Ford has produced and distributed an automobile with such a faulty part that it can cause the car to go out of control, it is rhetorically striking that this sentence contains not a whit of guilt for the motorcar company.

The key element in using these real examples should be a balanced selection from all of the types available. Drawing examples only from the political sphere will indeed make teachers liable to charges of political bias. However, drawing a good selection of examples from international politics, domestic politics, business and industry, and even personal usage makes the charge of bias far more difficult to prove. Another major aspect of instruction in doublespeak is emphasizing to students the problems that it can cause. Instead of simply telling students that they have to eliminate ambiguity, euphemism, abstractions, and high-level generalizations (an impossible task), teachers must indicate clearly that the use of such techniques for obfuscation has the same ethical status as out-and-out lying. Indeed, many ambiguous or "polite" words are essential to the language, and, insofar as they help social relationships, they keep us from reverting to a state of nature in which we bludgeon each other

with clubs over insults real or imagined. But students should learn that when we use ambiguity to cover up the truth, particularly when we use it intentionally, then we have caused problems for ourselves and those with whom we work and live.

Students must be warned that they have to be on the alert constantly not only about the language habits of others but about their own. Certain aspects of doublespeak have become so much a part of the language (as they would be expected to) that many people use them without the slightest awareness that they are being dishonest. Students need to learn that they must be aware of their own motives and attempt to discover the motives of others – that motive and intention are the key factors in determining whether doublespeak is at work or not.

But they must not be led to oversimplify. They must understand that doublespeak is a complex phenomenon,[16] just as complex as those we have already faced in trying to determine the intention of literary works. Providing a warning and a sense of complexity are an important part of our pedagogical task.

NOTES

[1]George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), p. 215. See also "Politics and the English Language" in *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950).

[2]*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 303.

[3]Deems M. Brooks, "Language in Political Speaking," *Doublespeak*, ed. Norman J. Betz and Robert C. Jones (Warrensburg: Central Missouri State University, 1976), p.25.

[4]Resolutions passed by the National Council of Teachers of English, 1971. See Hugh Rank, "The Teacher-Heal-Thyself Myth," *Language and Public Policy*, ed. Hugh Rank (Urbana: NCTE, 1974), pp. 215-234.

[5]A perfect example is Doug Kneibert, "Personal Slants," *The Sedalia Democrat*, March 19, 1976, p.6.

[6]See also Jim Grinstead, "True Doublespeaker Tells It Like It Isn't," *Kansas City Times*, March 14, 1976.

[7]For comment on these inseperable language elements, see George A. Miller, "The Human Link in Communication Systems," in *The Psychology of Communication* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), pp. 45-55; For an interesting discussion of the general issue, see Morton

W. Bloomfield, "The Problem of Fact and Value in the Teaching of English," *Perspectives on Languages*, ed. John A. Rycenga and Joseph Schwartz (New York: Ronald, 1963), pp. 276-281. While many of Bloomfield's comments relate to usage, they have clear applications in instruction in doublespeak.

[8]W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and M.C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *Essays in Modern Literary Criticism*, ed. Ray B. West, Jr. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), pp. 174-89.

[9]Walter Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction," *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 9-21.

[10]Helen S. Cairns and Charles E. Cairns, *Psycholinguistics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), pp. 24-26, 173-178. See also Stehen Ullman, "Semantic Unversals," *Universals of Language*, ed. Joseph H. Greenberg (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966), pp. 217-262.

[11]See Roger Brown, *Words and Things* (New York: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 82-109, 155-193. See also Barry M. Kroll and Robert J. Vann, eds., *Exploring Speaking-Writing Relationships* (Urbana: NCTE, 1981); and Richard Ohmann, "Use Definite, Specific, Concrete Language," *College English*, 41 (1979), 390-397.

[12]A teaching source that is still useful is Richard Gambino, "Public Doublespeak: A Glossary of Evasive Language in Government," *English Journal*, 63 (1974), 24-25. Additional techniques are discussed in Rank, ed., *Language and Public Policy*. See especially David Burmeister, "The Language of Deceit," pp. 40-51.

[13]Additional examples are found throughout *Language and Public Policy*. See especially Fred. M. Hechinger, "In the End Was the Euphemism," pp. 205-211.

[14]See Rank, Kneibert, and Grinstead.

[15]For a good analysis see H. Thomas McCracken, "Politics and the Study of Language," *Language and Public Policy*, pp. 184-188. See also Bruce E. Broubeck, "The Rhetoric of Political Corruption: Sociolinguistic, Dialectical and Ceremonial Processes," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 64 (1978), 145-72.

[16]A good sense of the complexity of the issues is conveyed in Rank and James L. Kinneavy, "Contemporary Rhetoric," *The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric*, ed. Winifred Bryan Horner, (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1983), pp. 182-84.

"Goodwrite": Orwell's Use of Language in *1984*

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George Orwell wrote *1984* at the end of his life, as he was dying of tuberculosis. What this effort cost him in physical and mental strain can well be imagined. His letters of the period speak of the urgency of the task, of his desperate desire to finish the novel before he himself was finished. Perhaps he best describes the ordeal in an essay he wrote shortly before beginning the novel, "Why I Write" (1947): "Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never understand such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand." (All references to Orwell's novel and essays herein are from Irving Howe, ed., Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four: Text, Sources, Criticism*, 2nd. ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1982.)

The demon that drove Orwell in writing *1984* was the same one that had bedeviled him over a period of years. At the end of "Why I Write," he declared, "Good prose is like a windowpane. I can't say with certainty which of my motives are the strongest, but I know which of them deserves to be followed. And looking through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a *political* purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally." His motive in *1984* was clearly to satirize and expose totalitarianism, to enumerate and decry the crimes committed in the name of the totalitarian state. He described a society that he feared would come to pass: a state ruled by Big Brother (who bore, in his posters, a stunning resemblance to Joseph Stalin); and resembling, to Orwell, the cold, ruthless, stagnant society of post-World War II Soviet Russia. As a disenchanted ex-communist, Orwell wrote to warn his readers (presumably and primarily his countrymen of England, the Oceania of the novel). He wrote, as he always wrote, with passion, directness, and candor; and he wrote, as he always wrote, politically. In another essay written at this time, "Politics and the English Language," Orwell said, "All issues are political issues, and politics is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia. Where the general amosphere is bad, language must

suffer." And, he added, ". . . one ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language." This defines, for me, one of the principal themes of the novel: of the many crimes committed by the characters, perhaps the most appalling is the crime against language.

Orwell cared exceedingly about good language. In some of his most earnest statements in "Politics and the English Language" and "Why I Write," and in another essay written at the same time, "The Prevention of Literature," he deplored the current misuse of language. At the same time, he issues some blunt and clear warnings about bad writing practice, and offered some sensible and practical suggestions in the ensuing comments on *1984*. And, where the temptation is irresistible, I will also adduce what I regard as some of the abuses of language that Orwell deplored as they have been practiced by luminaries of the recent American political scene.

The hero of *1984* is a 39-year old self-styled wimp named Winston Smith. Orwell named him after one of the premier masters of the English language, Winston Churchill. This was a deft, even sly bit of irony. Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth is to rewrite history; he's not just a revisionist, he's an obliteratist (to coin an ugly one). He literally destroys history by expunging the past from any printed text. To do so, he must destroy also any evidence that he *has* destroyed the record, so that the past never existed at all, except as it has been rewritten to conform to current policy. Orwell explains the significance of this kind of work in "The Prevention of Literature": "Totalitarianism demands, in fact, the continuous alteration of the past, and in the long run, probably demands a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth."

Two observations seem pertinent here. First, Winston works full time creating lies for the Ministry of Truth. Other bureaucracies of Oceania are similarly whited sepulchres: The Ministry of Plenty announces each day new stringencies for the economy, such as reduced chocolate rations; the Ministry of Peace is in the business of making war; and the most terrifying of all, the Ministry of Love, is a prison where citizens are tortured and executed. About the time *1984* appeared, the U.S. War Department was renamed the Department of Defense. This seemed an odd and misleading gesture then, and has seemed so many times since—e.g., while Americans made war in places like Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, and Central America. These actions have been called, by the proprietors and managers of the wars, a policy of "peacekeeping." Second, Winston's daily labors of revising history remind one of a curious piece of work carried out by military planners at the behest of President Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, during several of the Vietnam

years: the careful duplication of the paper work on both planning and strike reports to make it appear that American bombs were being dropped on targets in Vietnam, when in fact they were being dropped on Cambodia, which was, as Nixon and Kissinger kept telling us, a neutral nation with whom we were not at war. Orwell points out wryly "But since in practice, no one is infallible, it is frequently necessary to rearrange past events in order to show that this or that mistake was not made, or that this or that imaginary triumph really happened." ("The Prevention of Literature.") The key to this kind of magic is the uttered or printed work, and the power of the magic is control. O'Brien tells Winston, "He who controls the past controls the future; and he who controls the present controls the past." By his obliteration of the historical record, Winston provides Big Brother with that control.

After performing the monotonous labors at the Ministry of Truth, always under the watchful eye of suspicious superiors, Winston yearns for privacy, which is almost impossible because of the ubiquitous telescreen and hidden microphones. He manages to secure some privacy in the corner of his room, out of range of the telescreen. What does he do? He writes in a journal. But he does not write in the official language of Newspeak, with its ugly, monstrous, and reductive vocabulary; rather, he writes in a breathless, spontaneous, childish, and natural style. His first entry begins, "April 4th, 1984. Last night to the flicks. All war films. One very good one of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean. Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him. . . ." Winston feels guilty writing in his journal, for of course he is committing a crime for which he could be jailed or executed. He is guilty of thoughtcrime—having private thoughts—officially forbidden by the state, and of using a language at variance with Newspeak.

Winston is also enchanted by the natural, vulgar speech of the proles, the subliterate, officially inferior slave class of the state. He prowls the prole section of the city, listening in secret delight to their coarse and vulgar conversations, and especially to their spontaneous outbursts of song. He listens to an old, ugly, fat washerwoman singing as she hangs out her laundry in the courtyard beneath the window of the love nest he shares with Julia. Suffused in his love for Julia, Winston looks down at the woman and remarks, "She's beautiful." Julia replies, "She's a meter across the hips, easily." But Winston insists, "That is her style of beauty." At another time, with Julia in the woods, he hears a thrush singing in a tree. He listens in rapture, stunned by the profuse strains of unpremeditated art. Later, he asks Julia, "Do you remember that thrush that sang to us, the first day, at the edge of the woods?" She says, "He wasn't singing to us. He was

just singing to please himself. Not even that. He was just singing." But Winston knows better, because he wrote in his journal for the same reasons. And he thinks to himself, "The birds sing, the proles sing, the Party does not sing." This fact somehow defines the ugliness and dullness of Big Brother's society, which is without real music and real language. There may be a similar barrenness of spirit in a memo sent by President Nixon during the 1972 election campaign to his appointments secretary, Dwight Chaplin: "I will not dance. When you're running for sheriff you dance. Not when you're running for President. I'm serious about this dancing thing. I don't dance and I don't wear funny hats. Let's be very clear about that."

Winston is also enchanted by the vitality and vulgarity of Julia's speech. She can be counted on to speak the plain truth and to deal in the realities of her earthy existence. When Winston philosophizes loftily about being spiritually dead in the airless society of Oceania, she retorts:

> "Oh, rubbish! Which would you sooner sleep with, me or a skeleton? Don't you enjoy being alive? Don't you like feeling? This is me, this is my hand, this is my leg, I'm real, I'm solid, I'm alive! Don't you like *this?*' She twisted herself around and pressed her bosom against him. He could feel her breasts ripe yet firm, through her overalls. Her body seemed to be pouring some of its youth and vigor into him. "Yes, I like that." he said.
> (90-91)

At another point she says to him, "When you make love, you're using up energy; and afterwards you feel happy and don't give a damn for anything. . . . All this marching up and down and cheering and waving flags is simply sex gone sour. If you're happy inside yourself, why should you get excited about Big Brother and the Three-Year Plans and the Two-Minute Hate and all the rest of the bloody rot?" (89)

In contrast to this refreshing vulgarity is the grey, lifeless, mechanical vocabulary of Newspeak. To maintain its control over both the actions and the thoughts of the citizens of Oceania, the government created Newspeak. Built into this artificial language is a planned obsolescence. In an appendix to the novel, entitled "Principles of Newspeak," Orwell explains its purpose: "Newspeak was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought, and the purpose was assisted by cutting the choices of words down to a minimum." The effect upon the citizens was to reduce their capacity to think any thoughts not in line with official policy. Winston's coworker, Syme, has the task of eliminating words from the dictionary, and he loves his work. Thinking about it, he grows rhapsodic: "It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. . . . You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is

the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?"

In practice, Winston does know what Syme is saying, but he does not agree with him about the joy and beauty of it. He receives an order one day that would read, in Oldspeak, "The reporting of Big Brother's Order for the Day in the Times of December 3rd, 1983, is extremely unsatisfactory and makes references to non-existent persons. Rewrite it in full and submit your draft to a higher authority before filing." In Newspeak, it reads, "times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling." Dealing with such wretched stuff day after day, Winston quite understandably yearns for a well of English undefiled, or at least one defiled by the earthiness of natural speech.

In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell decried the tendencies of writers who deal in slovenly prose. He enumerated several types of ambiguity—such as *dying metaphors"* ("take up the cudgels," "fishing in troubled waters"), "operators on verbal false limbs" ("render inoperative," "militate against"), *"meaningless words"* ("romantic," "values," "plastic"), and *"Pretentious diction"* ("epoch-making," "clarion call"). These verbal vapors exactly describe Newspeak, which has within its power of utterance the capacity to reconstruct truth. Under torture, Winston is made to forego the certitude of two and two making four, and to accept the official truth that occasionally demands that two and two make five.

All of this is not unlike the ingenious play of euphemism we get through official channels. We are charmed by the short hand vocabulary of Nukespeak—"Throw-weight megatonnage," and "mutually assured destruction," with its apt acronym. We watch the "pre-emptive strikes" and "protective retaliation" of our bombs pouring into Lebanese hillsides, while our Marines execute "inoperative redeployment." During the Watergate years, the air was full of "inoperative statements," "that point in time," "executive privilege," and "national security." The White House tapes told us, more vulgarly, about "stonewalling" and something called a "modified limited hang-out." Orwell deplored these practices: "The tendency in modern prose is away from concreteness." And he added, "The great enemy of clear language is insincerity." The problem could not be stated more clearly.

Orwell cites two mental constructs that make Newspeak possible, in fact inevitable. One is "crimestop," which he defines as "the faculty of stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thoughts. It includes the power of not grasping analogies, of failing to perceive logical errors, or misunderstanding the simplest arguments if they are inimical to Ingsoc (English Socialism), and of

being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction. Crimestop means, in short, protective stupidity." As Winston is being re-educated by O'Brien, he comes to understand how this mental game is played: "Anything could be true. The so-called laws of nature were nonsense. The law of gravity was nonsense. 'If I wished,' O'Brien had said, 'I could float off this floor like a soap bubble.' Winston worked it out. 'If he *thinks* he floats off the floor, and if I simultaneously *think* I see him do it, then the thing happens.'" (184-5) Thus Winston, though he is intelligent enough to realize that he is daily perpetuating lies, can finally believe in the validity of what he is doing – not only that it is right for society, but that it is true.

A corollary to "crimestop" is "doublethink," the power of "holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them." Winston has more trouble with this mental discipline because he has both a memory of the officially discredited past and curiosity about the unknown. He wonders whether or not the putative enemy of the state, Goldstein, and his followers, the Brotherhood, actually exist. He even wonders whether or not Big Brother exists. He never finds out the truth. After being tortured into conformity he asks O'Brien, "Does he exist in the same way I exist?" O'Brien replies, "You do not exist." Ultimately, Winston discovers that this is the truth, and he believes it while yet retaining his capacity to remember and to think. And of course to love Big Brother.

A modern case in point of the exercise of combined crimestop and doublethink may be the recent posturing of the Reagan administration over the production and use of chemical and biological weapons. Reagan accused the Soviet Union of promoting the development, production, and use of such weapons, perhaps in Afghanistan, certainly in the Iran-Iraq war. And he sent Vice President Bush to Geneva to lay the matter before an international commission. At the same time, he called for increased American production of these weapons, ostensibly as a deterrent to the use of them. Thus far, doublethink – accepting mutually contradictory ideas simultaneously. And in imputing the evil practices to the Soviets – with a sense of moral outrage – while ignoring or forgetting any analogy to our own widespread use of napalm and Agent Orange a few years ago seems a classic example of crimestop. Add to this the hopeful talk of "winnable" nuclear war and you verify Orwell's observation in "Politics and the English Language": "In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible."

Much fascinated attention has been paid to Orwell's warnings about the violation and debasement of the language in *1984*. And he is surely gifted in showing the reader how ghastly and grotesque it

can be. In his own tongue, however, he fulfills his own high standards for good writing. In "Why I Write," he enumerated some of his reasons: "sheer egoism," "aesthetic enthusiasm," "historical impulse," and "political purpose." Under the heading of "aesthetic enthusiasm," he says, there is the "perception of beauty in the external world, or, on the other hand, in words and their right arrangement. Pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story." The novel *1984* is rife with good writing. There is the description of the bird singing in the woods:

> A thrush had alighted on a bough, not five meters away, almost at the level of their faces. Perhaps it had not seen them. It was in the sun, they in the shade. It spread out its wings, fitted them carefully into place again, ducked its head for a moment, as though making a sort of obeisance to the sun, and then began to pour forth a torrent of song. In the afternoon hush the volume of sound was startling. Winston and Julia clung together, fascinated. The music went on and on, minute after minute, with astonishing variations, never once repeating itself, almost as though the bird were deliberately showing off its virtuosity. Sometimes it stopped for a few seconds, spread out and resettled its wings, then swelled its speckled breast and again burst into song. Winston watched it with a sort of vague reverence. (82-3)

In another tone, Orwell describes Winston at lunch in the dreary, crowded cafeteria for workers in the Ministry of Truth:

> He meditated resentfully on the physical texture of life. Had it always been like this? Had food always tasted like this? He looked around the canteen. A low ceilinged, crowded room, its walls grimy from the contact with innumerable bodies, battered metal tables and chairs, placed so close together that you sat with elbows touching; bent spoons, dented trays, coarse white mugs, all surfaces greasy, grime in every crack; and a sourish, composite smell of bad gin and bad coffee and metallic stew and dirty clothes. Always in your stomach and in your skin there was a sort of protest, a feeling that you had been cheated of something you had a right to. It was true that he had no memories of anything greatly different. In any time he could accurately remember, there had never been quite enough to eat, one had never had socks or underclothes that were not full of holes, furniture had always been battered and rickety, rooms underheated, tube trains crowded, houses falling to pieces, bread dark-colored, tea a rarity, coffee filthy-tasting, cigarettes insufficient – nothing cheap and plentiful except synthetic gin. (41)

Orwell's thought and style constitute the real antidote to the idiocy, banality, and danger of Newspeak and its components, "thoughtcrime," "crimestop," and "doublethink." He recognized that good, clear, precise, unambiguous writing was indispensble to preserving the values he cared about— "beauty, truth, honesty, liberty, peacefulness, affection, privacy, and human decency," as one critic has summed them up. The connection between good writing and good thinking was for Orwell inescapable. He warned, "if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought." This is a double question worth pondering in *1984*—and in 1984.

Object Clearthink

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If the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, we must admit George Orwell's Big Brother of *1984* will forever loom over our shoulder. The kind of chains Big Brother would have us wear are forged with words, not with steel, but what is most terrifying is that we often walk right into the shackles waving our flag of ignorance. This is how our students, many of them, come to us. They sit in the classroom knowing all the answers, for haven't they watched TV? read the newspaper? Do they not believe what everybody else does? Forty thousand Frenchmen can't be wrong, can they? Of course they can. Although it may not be a popular idea, the majority can be wrong. Even a belief held dear for a lifetime can be wrong. We know this. How can we help our students know it?

We come close to sacred cows when we examine social, political, or religious issues in the classroom. It is important that while we may teach students how to think, we don't teach them what to think. After all, we don't want to be agents of Big Brother. Yet students need a good dose of healthy skepticism if they are to be guardians of free thought. This does not mean they must become cynics. Our aim is not to nurture into being an individual who is paranoid or who weighs and measures every cough, but one who examines the evidence, and in a word, is simply not so easy to be had.

So how can we help? We can expose our students to techniques of critical thinking. We can guide them to an objective stance in approaching an issue. And we can promote the exercise of logical

thought over emotionalism. To be able to take a distance on argument and analyze it move us away from emotional traps. A study of inductive and deductive reasoning, an awareness of the vast difference between fact and opinion, and a realization how fallacies in our thinking block logical thought will leave our students a little less gullible when they leave our class than when they entered.

I like to begin the unit on critical thinking with inductive/deductive reasoning. Because thinking logically is not always easy, a student needs lots of practice and perhaps a play test (a test you don't really count), although students don't have to know it's a play test until after they've taken it. It's a mistake to assume a student understands that inductive reasoning moves from specific to general and deductive moves from general to specific just because you've explained it more than once. People miss the idea entirely. It's mysteriously simple to invert the order, so they do need practice. It's helpful to draw a triangle on the board, point up, to demonstrate induction, and the triangle, point down, to demonstrate deduction. I begin discussion with induction because it seems the easiest to grasp, then follow with deduction and cover syllogisms. Don't be afraid to use very obvious or even silly examples. If they're ridiculous or funny, it only helps memory and understanding. An inductive example might be the following: (1) the grass is turning brown, (2) the flowers are drooping, (3) the garden is wilting, (4) the local lakes and ponds are drying up, (5) the earth is dry and cracking. Conclusion? Is it possible we could use a little rain? Another hypothesis might be constructed from these observations: (1) she has a pitter-patter of the heart, (2) she suffers a loss of appetite, (3) she demonstrates a penchant for writing certain initials over and over, (4) she gazes at nothing, (5) she listens to love songs, (6) she gets attacks of gigglitis. Conclusion? Of course. She's in love.

In teaching strategy, it's a mistake to stop with only the teacher's examples. Now it is time for the students to think of their own. Ask them to share their work with the rest of the class. It is a good idea to break the class into small groups: however, it's important that each student practice, so even though work is done in groups, each student should be reponsible for an original idea. To insure this, it might require collecting papers at the end of class.

Although inductive order is especially effective when the writer has to overcome prejudice or distrust, deduction is based on a statement already accepted as true. A conclusion is arrived at by assuming a certain premise. Because of this, deductive reasoning is easily used as a manipulative tool. If the premise may not be questioned, Big Brother, as well as others who are anxious to have us believe that we must drive a bigger car to be happy, wear a certain perfume to be desirable, and drink a particular cola to be "in," might prefer a

populous that does not bother to examine critically a premise. The syllogism, a deductive argument moving from two initial assumptions to a conclusion, demonstrates this form of reasoning most clearly, and, of course, when based on a true premise, does lead to an indisputable conclusion. The classic example is the following:

All men are mortal.
Socrates is a man.
Socrates is mortal.

This is a deductive argument based on a major premise unquestionably true. But premises proliferate the land with the conviction of zealots, and even if the zealot's intentions are "for our own good," that doesn't mean it *is* for our own good. It's important to teach students to examine the premise of any argument, no matter how convincing or trusted the source.

Again, students need lots of examples. I have found that board work and small groups help. Although reasoning/persuasion is a fairly serious subject, especially when we realize how easily words can control our thinking, keeping examples light or funny helps students to take a more objective approach in studying them. Students enjoy the following syllogism:

Dogs have four legs.
My sister's husband is a dog.
My sister's husband has four legs.

This syllogism provides the opportunity to examine closely the meaning of words and to see how easily we are led into confusion, or as George Orwell calls it, Doublethink. Here is another example that really gives some students problems in sorting out the meaning:

Potatoes grow underground.
Frenchfries are potatoes.
Frenchfries grow underground.

Well, they say, frenchfries are potatoes. And potatoes do grow underground. But they know that frenchfries, as frenchfries, do not grow underground. And the argument begins. It is not always easy to convince everyone that the second premise introduces potatoes in a different "sense" of potato. Frenchfries have been processed. The major premise speaks to potatoes in their natural form. By introducing the processed form as potato, a fourth term has been added and, therefore, the conclusion is no longer valid.

Deductive study shouldn't be all fun and games though; there are serious questions to be asked. Students should feel free to explore ideas no matter what direction they take. Does love conquer all? Will truth always out? Can money buy happiness? Our heritage is rich in

maxims. Have the students share their own beliefs. Separate the class into two groups, pro and con, for discussion. I promise you that it will be lively.

Fact and opinion is another area in which the difference between the two is not always obvious, although it would seem it should be so. Students feel, in the beginning, that recognizing the difference should take no effort at all, but when asked for a definition, often find it difficult. If they have difficulty in explaining the difference, it may be because many of the opinions we hear are so often repeated and so widely believed that we tend to accept them as facts. It is also easier to assume the truth of an assertion if we want it to be true and hard to accept an opinion as not true if we personally agree with it. There is still another problem that adds to the difficulty. If an opinion is presented in close proximity to a well-known fact, the opinion may well be believed to be part of the fact. Example:

> Babe Ruth, the most brilliant of baseball's players, hit a grand total of 714 home runs.

That he hit 714 home runs is a matter of record. That he was the most brilliant of baseball's players might be disputed. Consider this sentence:

> Brave American colonists boarded British ships in the Boston harbor December 16, 1773 and threw the contents of 342 chests of tea into the bay, a proud example of the American spirit.

Although some of us might agree with the sentiment, the only fact is that tea from 342 chests was thrown into the bay on December 16, 1773. A number of examples of this kind will help students see how easily fact and opinion can be woven together so closely that, unguarded, we may buy the whole package.

A follow-up assignment might be to have students read or listen to statements in the news media, their neighborhood, their circle of friends, etc., and bring them to class for discussion. We hear, for instance, that marijuana is less harmful than alcohol because it is not habit forming. It may not be habit forming, but the far reaching effects of it on the psyche and the brain are still not known. Without a bit of good skepticism to shield us, it's all too easy to be duped by the bombardment of doublespeak and doublethink, the half-truths, misquotes, and propaganda coming at us from every direction. Of course we don't want our students to think there is no goodness in the world; however, they do need to know that wearing rose-colored glasses won't make the bad go away either. It's there, but it can be effectively dealt with by being aware of the techniques involved in the constant sell and by taking a logical, objective approach to issues.

Logical fallacies end the unit. Students may find them a bit laborious at first but usually end up liking them. The purpose in working with fallacies of logic is to expose students to the pitfalls and blind spots in our reasoning process. Certain ones, like post hoc ergo prompter hoc and nonsequiturs, are especially troublesome, so more time should be taken with them. As with the other sections of persuasion and argument, students cannot be given too many examples or get too much experience in a classroom workshop environment. After listing various fallacies on the board, follow with a handout that asks them to match definitions with labels. Include answers on the handout so students can get quick feedback. Recognizing logical fallacies in a list of statements might follow. This should not be used as testing at this time, merely practice. They need room to explore and discover without penalty. Although it may go slowly at first; as they catch on, it becomes fun. At this point they can begin writing statements of their own which are examples of fallacies in thinking. It helps to begin with groups. When each group has written a sentence that demonstrates the fallacy, a representative writes the example on the board for the class as a whole to discuss. There are always interesting, weird, or funny statements to examine, so count on lots of laughter.

One of the problems in teaching logical fallacies is that students may write perfectly logical statements instead of the example of the fallacy. Remind them that this study concerns *flaws* of reasoning. For instance the fallacy either/or can be confusing to them. When an individual has only two choices, it's not a fallacy. "Either you pay back the money you owe me or I'll break your nose" is an ultimatum, not a fallacy, if that's what you'll really do. But the statement "I've been stood up because she doesn't like me or she went out with another guy" is a fallacy because there may, of course, be a number of other reasons for being stood up. When asked to demonstrate an analogy as fact one young man wrote: "An older man is like an aged race horse. He can't cross the finish line." I didn't hesitate to tell him how wrong he is, and in this case he didn't mind. It may also help to clear up the difference between post hoc and nonsequitur by changing a nonsequitur into post hoc. Example:

nonsequitur: Joan uses Sin Perfume.
She'll get a man.

post hoc: Joan got a man.
She used Sin Perfume.

Among other areas to study, social and political poems and short stories abound in various fallacies. Many of them are guilty of playing with meanings in their several senses or oversimplifying. For in-

stance, in the poem "The Man He Killed" by Thomas Hardy we see two strangers, both good men, meeting on the battlefield who would otherwise have sat down together over a beer, had not the insanity of war prevailed. But the poem fails to allude to any notion that war concerns much more than two good people not wanting to shoot each other. It says nothing of the insanity of an aggressor or the cause of freedom. Through the ages we have had to meet aggressors, and there are causes worth fighting for.

It is a pleasant duty to guide students into the joys of literature and poetry, to teach them how symbolism works and how words sing on a page. But they also need to be armed with an awareness of the techniques of doublethink. Let's promote a healthy skepticism. Let's opt for clearthink.

Orwell in This—Or Any Other—Year

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George Orwell may have intended *1984* to be a satire on Soviet totalitarianism, but that is not how one should teach the novel to high school students.

Each page of the book offers a lesson in how to read, and so I begin my discussion of the novel by asking my students if *they* can read.

They look at me as though I were a raving lunatic and all very quickly affirm that yes, of course, they can read.

I then write a sentence (taken from a dust-jacket blurb) on the board: "Alfredo Segre's *Mahogany* is—and I make no bones about it—out and away the best novel in my experience written by an Italian about the mahogany trade in Portuguese West Africa." (Lionel Hale, in the *London Observer.)*

I next ask two or three students to read the sentence aloud. Then I ask the class in general if their saying of the sentence written on the board is sufficient evidence that the speakers could, indeed, read.

The speakers are offended and their classmates rise to their defense. "Yes, yes," they all agree. The impatience in their voices suggests they they would like to move on to a topic a little more worthy of their sophistication.

"But," I ask, "what does the sentence mean?"

They roll their eyes, raise their eyebrows, and give one another knowing looks: this tedious fool of a teacher should be sent back to the more secure world of Dick and Jane Readers.

One of them—out of pity, no doubt—wearily explains the "obvious" for my particular benefit: "It means it was the best novel he ever read about the mahogany trade in Africa."

"Do you suppose," I continue, "that means that Lionel Hale thought it was a good book?"

"Sure, that's what it says."

"Does it?"

"Of course. Why don't *you* read it?"

"I could probably *say* the words on the board as well as the next person, but you should not be satisfied until you are certain that I *understand* the words. How would you know that?"

"We would know you could understand it if you can put it in your own words."

"Would it help, then, if I were to say that the sentence means that Lionel Hale thought it was the best novel he ever read about the mahogany trade in Africa?"

"Sure. It would mean you could understand the sentence."

"What if I were to say, instead, that I'm not certain about what the sentence means—although I can probably guess at what he intended to convey to his readers?"

"Then we would think you were probably a little crazy," the class wit responds, "and that you shouldn't be teaching this class."

I let them laugh and turn to write on the board again: "Three men went to sea in a sieve. If they had been wiser, my tale would have been longe.."

When I finish writing I ask what happened to the three men.

A chorus of voices, in varying tones of exasperation respond with "they drowned!"

"Where does it say that? How do you know?"

"Well," one of them kindly explains, "a sieve has holes in it and so it wouldn't make a very good boat and if they were dumb enough to use a sieve for a boat they wouldn't last too long."

"But tell me how you know that. I don't see anything on the board about people drowning."

After a short silence, one of them volunteers with: "I just figured it our by thinking about it."

"Good," I respond, "perhaps we can also just figure out what Lionel Hale meant by thinking about what he wrote."

And, after very carefully examining the sentence, they begin to see that Hale, intentionally or not, so qualified his praise of the book as to render it virtually meaningless. As one student, who obviously

relished the absurdity, explained: "It is a little bit like saying that Bobby Douglass was the greatest six foot four two hundred and thirty pound left-handed quarterback from Kansas who ever started for the Chicago Bears before the decade of the eighties."

It is through a series of exercises, much like the examination of Lionel Hale's review of Alfredo Segre's *Mahogany*, that I prepare my students for the kind of critical reading that will be necessary to understand Orwell's novel (or, for that matter, any text).

By the time they encounter Julia in *1984*, they are on the alert. They see, with just a little coaching, that even the physical description of the woman who evokes such contradictory emotions in Winston—"A narrow scarlet sash, emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League, was wound several times about the waist of her overalls, just tightly enough to bring out the shapeliness of her hips."—has a deeper purpose that mere description. They come to understand that careful reading can reveal that it expresses something about Julia and that it also says something about Winston's society.

They see, too, the implications in what they hitherto might have regarded as "innocent passages of boring description": "All over Oceania this morning there were irrepressible spontaneous demonstrations when workers marched out of factories and offices and paraded through the streets with banners voicing their gratitude to Big Brother."

The students actually begin to question what they read. They wonder what kind of banners could have been prepared "spontaneously." One student, recalling how long it took to make a few posters for a homecoming game, suggests that the sentence was yet another illustration of how doublethink operated in the world of Big Brother. Another student reminds the class of the "commanded spontaneous demonstration" in *Animal Farm*. Yet another suggests that the language of the passage in *1984* is uncomfortably like the wording of a recent annoucement from the *Daily Bulletin* issued by the school administration: "Show some school spirit! Attend the pep-rally in the gym at one o'clock. All students and faculty must attend."

After weeks of drilling on the meaning of sentences, they do begin to see that it is possible to read on a level that will take them beyond merely being able to find out what programs will be offered on the major television channels in prime time. And it is George Orwell who opens this new door to understanding.

We can then go on to other things. We talk about the "weasel words" of Madison Avenue, about what it really means if, say, eighty-four films in any given year are proclaimed to be "one of the year's ten best!" We explore, too, what it might mean if some fifty to seventy-five percent of all films reviewed receive a "must-see" (four

star) rating.

We examine the sometimes curious language of the Pentagon and wonder why the "combat emplacement evacuator" would be used to describe an ordinary shovel and why "aerodynamic decelerator" would be substituted for the more ordinary "parachute."

After a little practice in "Pentagonese," they are asked to write a "brief" for the United States Department of Defense to justify the expenditure of thousands of dollars for something that might be purchased in a local hardware store for less than a dollar. (See, for examples, back issues of I.F. Stone's Bi-Weekly, or *The Chicago Tribune*, November 6, 1983.)

One student, rapidly becoming a past-master of doublespeak, glibly justified the expenditure of $518.12 for each APOCO (which, he explained, was an acronym for "Absolute Protection of Organization in Chronological Order") as being "vital to our national security. This appropriation must be approved. If we don't have more APOCOs than the Russians, all of our lives will definitely be in danger."

APOCOS, he added in a footnote for those who (like his instructor) were mystified by what familiar object was designated by "Absolute Protection of Organization in Chronological Order," "sounds so much more impressive and, besides, how else could you get people to appropriate $518.12 for each stapler?"

The students find these exercises enjoyable, but it also makes them see how easy it is to distort the truth. They do not find the language of war ("pacify the infrastructure," for example) to be very amusing, and they see quite clearly what Orwell meant when he wrote that "political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible."

The high seriousness with which Orwell approached language – and which I encourage and cultivate on the first day and every day of class – also helps my students to look critically at, say, the opening sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth univerally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."

They see, too, the sinister implications of Macbeth's "But Banquo's safe?" (with "twenty trenched gashes on his head") and they see the serpent that looks like "the innocent flower" in Lady Macbeth's "He that's coming must be provided for."

We should not read George Orwell in high schools, then, only because he write satires of Soviet totalitarianism, nor because he "predicted" what political conditions would be like in 1984. We should read him because of his passionate concern for language and, as far as the classroom is concerned, *1984* should "not be of an age, but for all time!"

Vocabulary*
A Digest of Current Theory and Practice

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"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean. . . ."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master – that's all." (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1872.)

The nature and origins of words have long held a fascination for interested scholars and lay public, not only to satisfy intellectual curiosities, but also because word knowledge has particular importance in literate societies. For the same reasons, scholarly interests have turned toward determining the nature of vocabulary development – that is, how and to what extent speakers and writers of English become, like Humpty Dumpty, masters of our lexical stock.

The outcomes of these investigations are of more than passing interest to educators; for word knowledge contributes significantly to achievements in the subjects of the school curriculum, as well as in formal and informal speaking and writing. In fact, a substantial body of research has been published in this century concerning the educational implications of these vocabulary studies (Dale and Razik 1963). The purpose of this digest, then, is to summarize briefly how these interests are explained in current literature and to suggest some resources available for further reading.

Definition of Vocabulary

The vocabulary, or *lexicon*, of a language encompasses the stock of words of that language which is at the disposal of a speaker or writer. Contained within this lexical storehouse is a core vocabulary of the words used to name common and fundamental concepts and situations of a culture, as well as subsets of words that result from

* A product of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

one's personal, social, and occupational experiences. Probably the most important influence on one's speech is the simple circumstances of the language spoken in the country of one's birth. Each of us grows up interacting with and interpreting the world around us, to a large degree through the medium of language.

Sources of English Vocabulary

Languages are as vibrant and dynamic as the cultures of which they are a part, and the lexical stock of a language is a vivid example of this linguistic principle. Words are, after all, no more than labels for *concepts* about the world around us, and as new concepts emerge or old ones change, the lexical stock changes accordingly. It is linguistic paradox that change is a constant when applied to vocabulary. Many words in common use 200 years ago are now obsolete, just as many words in use today will be tomorrow's artifacts.

The English language is no exception, with a lexicon that reflects its many sources of origin and the effects of change over time. Besides the core stock of words rooted in Anglo-Saxon beginnings, English contains additional thousands of words borrowed from language communities with whom we have come in contact. Both of these sources have provided yet more words—those that have been derived from earlier word forms by addition of prefixes and suffixes or those that have been shifted to new grammatical functions. Still more words have emerged by the process of compounding in which existing words are joined to form new combining parts of words, or simply by creating new words out of "whole cloth." The ingredients of our lexical stock are indeed rich and varied. (See Bolton 1982, Francis 1965, Laird 1981, Pyles 1971, Shipley 1977.)

Vocabulary Development

We do not learn most of our words by looking them up in a dictionary. Rather, we learn them *in the context of our experiences with listening, speaking, reading, and writing*. Many studies have been undertaken to determine the nature and extent of children's vocabulary development (Petty, Herold, and Stoll 1968). These studies demonstrate the truly prodigious linguistic accomplishments that children attain by the time they reach school age. While estimates vary, by age six most children have active vocabularies numbering in the several thousands of words (deVilliers 1978).

There is, however, an important difference between knowing words and understanding their broad range of uses and referents. For vocabulary development is first and foremost a matter of concept development. For this reason considerable attention has been turned in recent years to children's semantic development; that is, to the development of word meaning (See Anglin 1970, deVilliers 1978,

Foss and Hakes 1978.) These studies illustrate that *how* words are used, not their length or frequency of use, indicates children's lexical maturity and, commonly, their intellectual maturity as well (Straw 1981, 185).

Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary development is, of course, a lifetime undertaking in which school plays a critical role in enriching and extending the young child's basic lexical repertoire, particularly through the medium of written language. Yet, "it is not the enlargement of vocabulary instruction itself that is of value but the enlargment of the mind to new ideas" (Petty, Herold, and Stoll, 1968). For this reason, vocabulary instruction properly belongs in all subjects of the curriculum in which students meet both new ideas and the words by which they are represented in the language.

The opportunities for vocabulary instruction are especially pronounced, however, in language arts and reading where words themselves can be an appropriate focus of study. Bearing in mind the dictum that knowledge of word meaning is the ultimate objective of study, teachers can provide numerous opportunities for students to explore the origins and forms of words as a means of extending and enriching their word knowledge. (See Dale and O'Rourke 1971, Hodges 1982, Johnson and Pearson 1984.)

Teachers can also use students' personal experiences and prior knowledge to develop vocabulary in the classroom. Through informal activites such as *semantic association* students brainstorm a list of words associated with a familiar word, pooling their knowledge of pertinent vocabulary as they discuss the less familiar words on the list. *Semantic mapping* goes a step further, grouping the words on the list into categories and arranging them on the visual "map" so that relationships among the words become clearer. In *semantic feature analysis* words are grouped according to certain features, usually with the aid of a chart that graphically depicts similarities and differences among features of different words. Finally, *analogies* are a useful way of encouraging thoughtful discussion about relationships among meanings of words. (See Johnson and Pearson 1984, 33-50, for illustrations of these activities.)

The linguist W. N. Francis once commented that "many people . . . go through life with a vocabulary adequate only to their daily needs. . . but never indulging in curiosity and speculation about words. Others are wordlovers—collectors and connoisseurs. . . But even those who aspire no further than to the writing of good clear expository prose must become at least amateur connoisseurs of words. Only this way—not by formal exercises or courses in vocabulary building—will they learn to make the best possible use of the vast and

remarkable lexicon of English" (Francis 1965, 164-65).

The success or failure of schooling to foster word knowledge is in large part dependent upon teacher attitude toward vocabulary. Thus, in the final analysis, teachers who are "wordlovers" themselves provide students both with a potent example of the value and pleasure that can be derived from exploring the richness and diversity of the English lexicon, and with classroom contexts for such exploration by drawing on students' shared experiences. Students may thus learn that language learning is a lifelong venture, one in which written language plays a particularly important role. Every contact with written language affords an opportunity to learn more not only about the writing system we use—its structures and how words are spelled—but also about the meanings and uses of words themselves.

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George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* An Autobiographical Analysis

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When Orwell is taught and discussed, the common assumption has been that he is a writer of realistic prose whose work is to be understood and evaluated primarily in terms of socio-political categories. He is thus taught and studied almost exclusively from the standpoint of content rather than form. However, it is time we recognize that, even thought the larger social issues occupy Orwell's focus, it is his own experiences that provide the materials for his narrative. The persona in *Down and Out in Paris and London* is clearly meant to be identified with the author, therefore rendering imperative a formal and generic analysis of the book as autobiography.

Autobiography might be initially defined as a conscious attempt at self-expression for a defined, public audience whose writer uses the self as subject and conveys something of the self, imparting to the reader a sense of truth. And "good" autobiography, like "good' fiction, is artistically shaped for the purpose of creating a desired effect.

Down and Out In Paris and London is an account of Orwell's observations of and participation in poverty, portraying the growth of his social conscience as he moved from naive observer to mature participant, as revealed in his condemnation of the economic system that encourages and perpetuates abuse. That this movement from naive observer to mature participant is Orwell's structuring device is obvious, so it should follow then that it is also obvious that *Down and Out* is much more than reportage, that a great deal of care and artistry has gone into the work.

Orwell's story is the development of his social conscience. Because *Down and Out* was intended for a bourgeois reading audience to whom poverty and its ugly manifestations were virtually unknown, the persona beginning as naive observer also offers a commonality for identification. His naivete is expressed mainly in his experiences in France: Boris, the hotel, the restaurant, the pawnbrokers and shopkeepers. He has yet to assimilate the reality of Boris' declaration: "Appearance – appearance is everything, *mon ami*. Give me a new suit and I will borrow a thousand francs by dinner-time" (p.51). He is eventually to learn, however, that trappings supercede other considerations and judgments are made on the basis of superficiality. By the time he gets to the London section, he is able to articulate this principle: "The mass of the rich and the poor are differentiated by their incomes and nothing else, and the average millionaire is only the average dishwasher dressed in a new suit" (p.120). Extending this concept and challenging common notions, he argues that "if one looks closely one sees that there is no essential difference between a beggar's livelihood and that of numberless respectable people. Beggars do not work, it is said; but, then, what is *work*?" (p.173) To further illustrate his point, he offers a glossary of "London slang and swearing," the upshot being that perception is everything and arbitrary, and appearance and reality have little in common: "Evidently a word is an insult simply because it is meant as an insult, without reference to its dictionary meaning; words, especially swear words, being what public opnion chooses to make them (p.178).

In Roy Pascal's book, *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, he says that autobiography is "the story of a life in the world," and "the decisive achievement of the art of autobiography" is "to give us events that are symbolic of the personality as an entity unfolding not solely according to its own laws, but also in response to the world it lives in" (p.185). Orwell begins by acting and responding as one would in

polite bourgeois society. His experiences with Boris show him to be loyal and honorable, as seen when he reluctantly gives up his job at the hotel, about which he says: "However, I had promised Boris, so I gave notice" (p.100). The persona becomes more aware with his first indoctrination into poverty and he discusses the reality as "utterly and prosaically different" (p.16) from his expectation. He is totally at the mercy of those whose livelihoods appear to be dependent on exploitation and his victimization serves to illustrate.

Exploitation is, of course, the predominant motif in *Down and Out*. Orwell insists that the system is structured to be self-perpetuating, encouraging, even demanding exploitation; the world depicted is one in which everyone exploits everyone else.The petit bourgeoisie exploit those who need their services. Of the slum area, he says: "Amid the noise and dirt lived the usual respectable French shopkeepers, bakers and laundresses and the like, keeping themselves to themselves and quietly piling up small fortunes. It was quite a representative Paris slum" (p.6). Children exploit their parents: "In another room lived a Russian woman and her son, who called himself an artist. The mother worked sixteen hours a day. . . while the son, decently dressed, loafed in the Montparnasse cafes" (p.7). Parents exploit their children: "She was some peasant girl, doubtless, whom her parents had sold into slavery" (p.14). Employees exploit each other: the doorkeeper at the hotel "counted out the money, less fifty centimes which he said was for insurance (a lie, I discovered afterwards)" (p.59). Management exploits labor, labor exploits management; pawnbrokers exploit their customers who in turn would not hesitate to misrepresent their goods for a higher return, or, as Orwell does, keep money mistakenly overpaid; lodging-house owners exploit tramps and beggars exploit "an appearance of misery" (p.172). Yet, because it benefits the bourgeoisie, the status quo is maintained. "The owners of lodging-houses would be opposed *en bloc* to any improvement, for their present business is an immensely profitable one" (p.212). Orwell steps beyond naivete with his awareness that the key to survival lies in one's ability to work within the corrupt system: to exploit.

Orwell's entering into the realm of mature participant is seen when sympathy, understanding, and admiration characterize his response to Bozo, who has refused to succumb to societal pressure to be defeated, to lose his dignity: "He had neither fear, nor regret, nor shame, nor self-pity. He had faced his position, and made a philosophy for himself. Being a beggar, he said, was not his fault, and he refused either to have any compunction about it or to let it trouble him" (p.166). The evolving perspective of the persona is encapsulated in one paragraph in which his manipulation of pronouns clearly indicates his switching of identification, his complete

understanding in his movement from naive observer to mature participant; he begins the incident: "*The tramps* treated the service as a purely comic spectacle. It was, indeed. . . but *their* behaviour passed all bounds [my italics]" (p.183).

Orwell's self-image, or identity, in *Down and Out* is defined in terms of his relationship to society, his social conscience. The persona represented Orwell's conscious re-creation of himself; meaning is dependent upon the perspective of this persona which, in *Down and Out* is that of an iconoclast who makes every effort to understand and articulate the plight of the down-and-outers, and despite the process of maturation the persona undergoes, is not able totally to enter into their consciousness. Orwell points out the distance between them and himself when he expresses his desire "to understand what really goes on in the souls of *plongeurs* and tramps and Embankment sleepers," having as yet not "seen more than the fringe of poverty" (p.213). Their thought processes occasionally perplex him yet: "With an income of ten shillings a week, to spend money on a shave—it is awe-inspiring" (p.134). His attempt at seeking to experience the life of the tramps is thorough, and clad in preparation for tramphood, he notes: "My new clothes had put me instantly into a new world. . . Dressed in a tramp's clothes it is very difficult, at any rate for the first day, not to feel that you are genuinely degraded" (p.129). Expressing the experience of real, sustained hunger and its connection to the defeated psyches of the down and out, he explains: "You discover that a man who has gone even a week on bread and margarine is not a man any longer, only a belly with a few accessory organs" (p.19).

This sense of understanding which he conveys gives credence to his characterization of Paddy: "He had lived on this filthy imitation of food till his own mind and body were compounded of inferior stuff. It was malnutrition and not any native vice that had destroyed his manhood" (p.153). This persona is sincerely interested in clearing up the popular misconceptions about the down and out. Placing the tramps' condition in proper perspective, as essentially victims of the system that fails to recognize their humanity, he explains: "A tramp tramps, not because he likes it, but. . . because there happens to be a law compelling him to do so. . . . He is a vagrant because, in the state of the law, it is that or starve. . . . They are ordinary human beings, and. . . if they are worse than other people it is the result and not the cause of their way of life" (p.202).

The "account of personalities, events and circumstances," says Pascal, becomes "the framework, in some sense the embodiment, of the personality of the writer. . . and one must be set free from them as historical facts, and from the concern with their accuracy as historical documents, in order to savour the quality of the central personality." The central personality in *Down and Out* is that of a

compassionate, morally indignant iconoclast who, despite his frequent disgust, uses a sense of humor in revealing his perspective. That capitalism, with the simple economic reality of supply-and-demand imbedded therein, is largely responsible for the sorry conditions against which Orwell protests can be inferred when he points out that "the number of unemployed men who are ready to do the work makes them powerless to fight for better treatment" (p.179).

Bringing the morality of the very structure that fosters abuse into question, he comments on "the social significance of a *plongeur's* life," asking, "Why does this slavery continue? People have a way of taking it for granted that all work is done for a sound purpose" (p.116). He then goes on to argue that "essentially, a 'smart' hotel is a place where a hundred people toil like devils in order that two hundred may pay through the nose for things they do not really want" (p.117), and "that this instinct to perpetuate useless work is, at bottom, simply fear of the mob" (p.119). Clearly, he is suggesting that this course is both counter-productive and asinine, but worst of all, needless. Thus linking the plight of the *plongeur* with that of the tramp, he says: "The important point is that a tramp's sufferings are entirely useless. He lives a fantastically disagreeable life, and lives it to no purpose whatever" (p.205). He gives the three major evils nurtured by the system and their effects on humanity: hunger and malnutrition, perpetual celibacy or homosexuality, and enforced idleness, all of which work to demoralize; "the evil of poverty is not so much that it makes a man suffer as that it rots him physically and spiritually. . . . No humiliation could do more damage to a man's self-respect" (p.203). His solution is dialectic, pragmatic, and incredibly simple: "For the question is, what to do with men who are underfed and idle; and the answer—to make them grow their food—imposes itself automatically" (p.207).

The most pervasive attitude revealed through this persona then is moral indignation. As Keith Alldritt points out in *The Making of George Orwell*, "the reportage and the social prescriptions are but different surface manifestations of the same fundamental desire, the desire for the revision of the assumptions upon which people relate to each other" (p.57). The assumptions Orwell would see revised are economic. One such illustration has to do with society's attitude toward beggars. Typically, Orwell challenges the morality inherent in these economic assumptions. He explains why beggars are universally despised: "It is for the simple reason that they fail to earn a decent living. In practice nobody cares whether work is useful or useless, productive or parasitic; the sole thing demanded is that it shall be profitable. . . . Money has become the great test of virtue. By the test beggars fail, and for this they are despised" (p.174). Orwell's indignation at this tendency to equate wealth with virtue, wherein

the degree of one's wealth is directly proportional to one's rights, one's power or powerlessness, is likewise indicated when he comments that "it is curious how people take it for granted that they have a right to preach at you and pray over you as soon as your income falls below a certain level" (p.181). Appealing to his bourgeois readers' sense of their own intellectuality, he says the educated man "does not see that since there is no difference between the mass of rich and poor, there is no question of setting the mob loose. The mob," he argues, "is in fact loose now, and – in the shape of rich men – is using its power to set up enormous treadmills of boredom, such as 'smart' hotels" (p.121).

Perhaps Orwell's most indignant response is to the phenomenon by which values advantageous to the exploiters have been so thoroughly inculcated into the psyches of the exploited that they believe their ill treatment to be justified and necessary! One tramp, accusing Orwell of misplaced sympathies, sets him straight: "If they made these places too comfortable, you'd have all the scum of the country flocking into them. It's only the bad food as keeps all that scum away. These here tramps are too lazy to work, that's all that's wrong with them" (p.198). This particular tramp dissociated himself from the others, the same sort of mentality being seen in Orwell's depiction of Parisian waiters: "The result is that between constantly seeing money, and hoping to get it, the waiter comes to identify himself to some extent with his employers" (p.77). Of course, this identification is entirely delusional and in fact serves to maintain the existing social order.

That this persona should reflect such outrage at the immorality of social inequities indicates extreme compassion, evident in his choice of incidents. Having mentioned that "it was tobacco that made everything tolerable" (p.35), the human qualities with which he endows the butts given him by a tramp with whom he had shared his tobacco parallel those of the tramps themselves and demand our compassion: "He put four sodden, debouched, loathly cigarette ends into my hand" (p.200). The very fact that he mentions the following incident, though it seems only to be in passing, reveals his compassionate response to the inhuman treatment of the mentally deficient: "The imbecile (there is an imbecile in every collection of tramps) said that he was too tired to walk and clung to the railings, until the Tramp major had to dislodge him and start him with a kick" (p.199).

As serious as the evils are that Orwell exposes, the persona in *Down and Out*, as in all his works, displays a sharp, subtle sense of humor. Understatement is used to achieve humor when he recalls sleeping on the floor after having been swindled into working to remodel the restaurant: "The first thing we saw in the morning were two large rats siting on the kitchen table, eating from a ham that stood there.

It seemed a bad omen" (p.105). Similarly, after describing the effects of going without food for three days, he says: "There are people who do fasting cures of three weeks or more, and they say that fasting is quite pleasant after the fourth day, I do not know, never having gone beyond the third day. Probably it seems different when one is doing it voluntarily and is not underfed at the start" (p.37).

He uses satire for humor, poking fun at wealthy Americans staying in "smart" hotels in Paris when he tells of a customer, from Pittsburgh, who "dined every night in his bedroom on grape-nuts, scrambled eggs and cocoa. Perhaps," he says, "it hardly matters whether such people are swindled or not." (p.83). Satirizing uselessness and ineptness in those members of society who are involved in no meaningful or productive activity, he describes the *patron* whose "sole job, besides ordering supplies, was to stand in the bar smoking cigarettes and looking gentlemanly, and he did that to perfection" (p.110). The image Orwell creates in his description of his consideration of seeking a job to give English lessons provides humor:

> Here was a splendid chance, and I could not take it, for it was impossible to go to the agency with my coat out at the elbow. Then it occurred to us that I could wear Boris' coat – it did not match my trousers, but the trousers were grey and might pass for flannel at a short distance. The coat was so much too big for me that I had to wear it unbuttoned and keep one hand in my pocket (p.33).

Lastly, Orwell achieves humor through irony. After having had his money stolen, he contemplates continued destitution, then recalls Boris' promise to help, saying: "It was a great relief to remember that I had after all one influential friend to fall back on" (p.26).

Significantly, the episodes marked by humor occur in the Paris section of *Down and Out*. As the persona evolves, the perspective changes: *Down and Out* is Orwell's tracing of his growing social awareness, a portrait of the social conscience becoming. Therefore, by the time he goes to London and has immersed himself in tramp life, he understands that there is nothing humorous about such tragic waste.

The sense of truth conveyed to the reader is dependent on the degree to which the authenticity of the persona, evolving or otherwise, has been established. *Down and Out* contains a number of devices suggesting a sincere intent toward truth, even accuracy, such as systematic accounts, lists, and catalogs, which also express immediacy. Portions are written in a guide or travel book mode. For example, he updates the inventory of his resources: "The tea-and-two-slices cost threepence halfpenny, leaving me with eight and

twopence" (p.132). As evidence of his intimate acquaintance with tramp life, he includes his glossary of "London slang and swearing" (p.174). His excruciatingly detailed descriptions confirm his claim of first-hand experience, one such example being that of the bathroom of one of the spikes which "was extraordinarily repulsive. Fifty dirty, stark-naked men elbowing each other in a room twenty feet square, with only two bathtubs and two slimy roller towels between tham all. I shall never forget the reek of dirty feet" (p.145). The catalog of ailments possessed by one tramp likewise gives credence to Orwell's story while hammering home his pleas for improved social structures for the less fortunate: "He had the following things wrong with him: on his crown, which was bald, he had eczema; he was shortsighted, and had no glasses; he had chronic bronchitis; he had some undiagnosed pain in the back; he had dyspepsia; he had urethritis; he had varicose veins, bunions and flat feet. With this assemblage of diseases he had tramped the roads for fifteen years" (p.139).

That this tramp symbolizes Orwell's assessment of the social mentality of the ruling classes in England is unmistakable. Working as he does, always from specific to general, and authenticating his claim of having taken a thorough sampling of conditions, he makes such statements as: "I believe that he was a typical tramp and there are tens of thousands in England like him" (p.149). His almost clinical description of his expeience with hunger suggests an attempt at total objectivity: "Complete inertia is my chief memory of hunger; that, and being obliged to spit very frequently, and the spittle being curiously white and flocculent, like cuckoo-spit" (p.38).

Thus, an examination of how the persona is defined and developed and the ways in which the authenticity of that persona has been established in *Down and Out in Paris and London* results in ample evidence of Orwell's having given conscious attention to form as well as to content. Orwell's perceptions, on the basis of the persona created in *Down and Out*, relate always to the morality of existing social conditions. "The effect of this self-imposed experience," says Alldritt, gives Orwell new knowledge, adding "confidence in his efforts to shock, belabour and assault those of his fellow bourgeois whose complacent acquiescence in an inhumanly hierarchical order permits the horror to exist" (p.56).

Down and Out in Paris and London is Orwell's own story of his social education. The persona begins as naive observer but he gradually becomes educated to the harsher realities of being one of the "have nots" in an economic system devoted to the benefit of the "haves." By the end of the book he has become a convincing mature participant.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Articles on the Illinois Literary Heritage

Poets and Suckers*

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The University of Illinois Assembly Hall in Champaign was completed in 1963, and Carl Sandburg accepted an invitation to make the dedication speech. He rose before the huge crowd in that strange, futuristic building which has been called everything from a concrete mushroom to a flying saucer, and began his speech with these words: "Greetings, fellow suckers!" Then he paused, enjoying the reaction he had undoubtedly sardonically anticipated. There were a few confident, knowledgeable laughs and a few rather strained, nervous titters. But for the most part the audience sat in stony silence, puzzled but with the vague feeling that they had been insulted. Was Sandburg saying that they were the kind of people of whom P. T. Barnum had said that there was one born every minute? And to whom W. C. Fields had said that he would never give an even break? The Champaign-Urbana *Courier* hastened to explain the next day what the cosmopolitan faculty of a large international university could not be expected to know: that Illinoisans have been known as "suckers" since early in the nineteenth century. Nobody knows for sure why; it may have originally implied uselessness, by analogy with those superfluous shoots that grow up the sides of corn stalks. But if it was originally a jeering term of opprobrium, like "Hoosier" or "Yankee Doodle," by the middle of the century it had become, like those other terms, neutral or even favorable in its connotations, so that even Lincoln's supporters could proudly call him "The Tall Sucker" as opposed to Douglas, "The Little Giant."

What pleases me about this story is Sandburg's sense of drama, his showman's awareness of the dramatic situation, and the way he dramatized, in three words, a basic theme in dedication ceremonies: the contrast between the Assembly Hall's stark international-modernist design and the central Illinois cornfields in which it was rooted. And not only their contrast but their continuity as well.

*Luncheon address delivered at the Illinois Literary Heritage Conference held last fall in Springfield under the joint sponsorship of the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Library Association and the Illinois Humanities Council. This conference was one of the many activities to grow from the Read Illinois Committee, created and maintained largely through the sponsorship of the Secretary of State. —**Dorothy Matthews, Editor and Member of Read Illinois Committee.**

"Greeting, fellow suckers!" made a connection between the present moment and history, between the modernist Assembly Hall and the dusty Illinois town squares where Lincoln and Douglas had debated a century before.

I teach a course at the University of Illinois every once in a while in The Literature of Illinois, or what, thinking of Sandburg, I like to think of as "Sucker Lit."

What is this Sucker Lit? Is there anything distinctive about it, apart from the obvious fact of its subject matter? I would like to suggest that there are three persistent elements in Illinois writing. The first is a deep involvement in reality. Illinois writing is, overwhelmingly, realistic writing, deeply absorbed in the realities of society and rather impatient with formalism or estheticism. Some of the finest Illinois writers—Eliza Farnham, William Herndon, Jane Addams, Thorstein Veblen—made no pretensions to do anything other than record facts (though they actually did much more). But even when Illinoisans began to write novels and poems, they preserved that sense of intense involvement in the real world. *Spoon River Anthology*, *Sister Carrie*, *Studs Lonigan*, *Humboldt's Gift*, artful though they may be, never lost touch with the raw data of the real world. Sometimes the tides of literary history have placed Illinois realists in the avant garde, as they did Masters and Sandburg, at least briefly; sometimes history has made realism seem old-fashioned. But it has persisted remarkably through almost two centuries of Illinois writing.

A second tendency I would identify in Illinois literature is a fierce idealism about human life and an equally fierce indignation when that idealism is disappointed or corrupted. Illinois was settled, for the most part, by utopians of various stripes who hoped to find, or more often, to create a new Eden in the West. A little later, the pastoral dream was echoed in an urban dream, with the rise of Chicago, a city that in its openness, its egalitarianism, and its expansiveness seemed to offer some of the same promise the prairie had. Carl Sandburg's personification of the city as a big-shouldered youth echoes the mythic embodiment of the prairie frontiersman of a half-century before. But scratch a utopian and you find a rebel. Illinois writers have taken the American dream seriously, and they have protested vigorously when that dream is corrupted. *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, *The Jungle*, *Chicago Poems*, *Studs Lonigan*, and *The Adventures of Augie March* all gain their energy from a kind of rage over dreams gone wrong.

Realism and idealism are tendencies that we might trace throughout Midwestern literature or even through American literature in general, though they appear elsewhere in rather different forms. But the third tendency I would point to is, by defini-

tion, unique to Illinois writing. This is the tendency to mythologize the features of the Illinois landscape, to make it into a symbol, or more precisely, a complex system of symbols. The Illinois writers have given Illinois a sort of imaginative reality; in a way, they have created an Illinois that is more real than the one we see from Interstate 57. Illinois in many ways has a sort of natural symbolism. A long wedge driven down through the heart of the country from the Great Lakes to the Ohio River, it seems to gather into itself the rest of the country in microcosm. The contrast between the northern part of the state, settled for the most part from the Northeast, and the south, settled from Tennessee and Kentucky, encapsulates the division of the country as a whole. The prairie which covers most of the central portion of the state still carries, tamed as it is by roads and fences, some of the same enigmatic fascination it had for the first white settlers: a suggestion of freedom, openness, and opportunity, along with a frightening sense of emptiness and loss of human boundaries. And Chicago, for a hundred years, has been America's principal urban symbol—the place where all the tendencies in America's cities are carried to an extreme: expansiveness, opportunity, and energy as well as violence, exploitation, and corruption. The symbolism that has grown up around Chicago has meant that we can have a "Chicago novel" in a way that we do not have a Detroit Novel, a Miami novel, or even a New York novel.

These three tendencies have persisted through the three periods into which Illinois writing seems naturally to fall: the first period, which takes up most of the 19th century, from about 1815 to about 1890; the second period, from about 1890 to about 1925, which takes in the remarkable flowering period which is called the Chicago Renaissance; and the period from 1925 to the present, when Illinois writers—James T. Farrell, Richard Wright, Nelson Algren, Harry Mark Petrakis, Saul Bellow—have joined the mainstream of American literature while still preserving their identity as Illinois writers.

The paradox of the 19th century Illinois writers is that the best of them did not think of themselves as writers at all. A surprising number of poems and stories were written on the Illinois frontier, many in response to recurrent cries for a Western literature, for Ohio tragedies and Indiana epics. What those enthusiastic frontier editors and critics did not realize was that the traditional genres did not necessarily fit the realities of frontier experience, which was better captured in such forms as the travel narrative, the personal memoir, newspaper stories, and political oratory. When we look back upon 19th century Illinois literature now, we are likely to be struck not by the mostly pallid and derivative art literature of contemporary anthologists but by such works as Eliza Farnham's 1846 *Life in Prairie*

Land, Peter Cartwright's *Autobiography*, Joseph Medill's stories for the *Chicago Tribune*, and the oratory of Abraham Lincoln and of Peoria's great agnostic Robert Ingersoll.

I would like to mention briefly two favorites of mine from this period, because, at the very threshold of Illinois writing, they anticipate so clearly its blend of realism, political idealism, and organic symbolism. These are two books by the founders of the English settlement in Albion in 1817: Morris Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey in America* and George Flower's *History of the English Settlement*. The story of the founding of Albion is, even in summary, already close to literature, perhaps an ironic comedy. In 1817, Birkbeck, a 53-year-old Quaker sheep-farmer from Surrey, joined forces with Flower, a 29-year-old son of a prosperous family in Hertfordshire, to found an English community in southern Illinois, a few miles across the river from Robert Owens' utopian town of Harmony, and Flower returned to England to see him and, although both remained in the new settlement, they never spoke again. The serpent in the Illinois Eden seems to have been a Miss Julia Andrews, a member of the exploration party. Both Birkbeck and Flower proposed to her on the journey, and Flower was accepted.

For twenty years or so, the English prairie was the best known and most hotly debated place in the American West, the focus of the controversy over whether emigration to the West was a good idea for Europeans and Eastern Americans. At least twenty-eight books and many more articles and essays were published about the English prairie between 1817 and 1836. Birkbeck himself was responsible for four of them, the best being the *Notes on a Journey in America*, which he wrote in 1817, in the midst of the excitement of settlement. Flower's *History of the English Settlement* was not written until forty-three years later, when, as an old man, in ill health, he was forced by financial reverses to leave the town he had founded and move to Mount Vernon, Indiana. Still in love with his Julia who had led to his break with his friend Birkbeck, he turned his thoughts back half a century and wrote his vivid, genial, and reconciliatory account of the settlement of Albion.

Birkbeck's *Notes* and Flower's *History* are both superbly written books, and together they not only capture much of the way life was in early nineteenth-century Illinois but also illustrate the main threads in what we might call the intellectual history of the Illinois frontier. Birkbeck was a thoroughgoing Neoclassic rationalist with visions of a frontier utopia framed according to the tenets of reason far from the long-enthroned corruptions of Europe, while Flower was a quintessential Romantic whose utopia in Albion was to be not a rationalist community but a bower in the heart of Nature, where the soul could tremble in deep accord with nature's changing moods.

Both men, of course, were ultimately disappointed in what they found, or in what they were able to create. But their reactions to the Illinois frontier are echoed in writers' reactions to many other Illinois frontiers, many less liberal, in the following hundred and seventy-five years.

I want to leap over almost a century and look at one brief poem from what I regard as the second major period of Illinois writing. I would like to call this period the Illinois Renaissance rather than the Chicago Renaissance. For one thing, as Robert Bray has recently shown in his fine book *Rediscoveries: Literature and Place in Illinois*, the achievements of the Chicago Renaissance writers grew out of a significant tradition of Illinois writing. And for another, the major works of the Renaissance tended to be not so much interpretations of Chicago as of Illinois. Maybe Edgar Lee Masters had to be in Chicago before he could gain the perspective to write the *Spoon River Anthology*, but it was of Petersburg and Lewistown that he wrote. And similar points could be made about such figures as Floyd Dell, Carl Sandburg, and Sherwood Anderson.

It would take a book, and indeed it has taken several books, to describe the achievements of the Illinois Renaissance. I would like to only suggest those achievements by looking at one short poem by Vachel Lindsay, "Springfield Magical":

Sometimes there comes a whisper from the grass,
"Romance, Romance—is here. No Hindu town
Is quite so strange. No Citadel of Brass
By Sinbad found, held half such love and hate;
No picture-palace in a picture book
Such webs of Friendship, Beauty, Greed and Fate!"
In this, the City of my Discontent,
Down from the sky, up from the smoking deep
Wild legends new and old burn round my bed
While trees and grass and men are wrapped in sleep
Angels come down, with Christmas in their hearts,
Gentle whimsical, laughing, heaven-sent;
And, for a day, fair Peace have given me
In this, the City of my Discontent!

This seems to me, in 1984, a wonderful poem. It would not have seemed so to me twenty-five years ago. I went to college and studied poetry in the fifties, and everything I learned tended to disqualify me for reading Vachel Lindsay. Poems, I thought, were tough nuts to crack, and the tougher they were the better they were as poems. Ideally, they should approach very close to complete unintelligibility. Furthermore, poems had nothing to do with real life; they were well-wrought urns, hermetically sealed off from the grubby, sweaty, in-

determinate world through which I walked to class.

I cannot blame my teachers for my developing such a narrow and misguided set of assumptions about poetry; I have always been quite capable of making monstrous mistakes on my own. But none of these assumptions has any relevance at all to "Springfield Magical," which implies, like all of Lindsay's work, that poetry can speak to ordinary people without ceasing to be poetry, that it is not incompatible with an idealistic, even visionary, hope for the American future, and that it can be built from the materials of our everyday surroundings, that it can make Springfield "magical." Or, to put it another way, "Springfield Magical," like the best of Lindsay's other poems, builds poetry out of the familiar Illinois blend of realism, idealism, and natural symbolism. I think we can find this blend in the other great works of the Illinois Renaissance as well—in the *Spoon River Anthology*, *Sister Carrie*, the poems of Carl Sandburg, and *Winesburg, Ohio*. James Dickey, in a recent essay on Vachel Lindsay which is a touching salute from one generation of American poetry to another, has recently suggested that we may have something to gain from rediscovering Lindsay's innocence and passion, his ability to "live naturally in a condition that many greater poets never had, or if they had it, were embarrassed or diffident about it: a total commitment to his own power of invention, a complete loss of himself in his materials." It is remarkable how much better a poet Lindsay has become since I was in college.

Some people may find it wrongheaded and mindlessly chauvinistic to speak of contemporary Illinois literature. Regionalism, they say, came to an end in American literature about the time of the First World War. Radio and television, the hard road and the interstate highway, the Wright brothers and the jet plane have wiped out regional distinctions, and writers today worry less about the Village Virus than about the Global Village. This may be true in some ways, but paradoxically, the increasing homogeneity of American life has periodically triggered a reaction into a heightened sense of place. In Illinois, this impulse has given us a rich body of modern literature which combines a broad perspective with a keen sense of locale and those persistent Illinois qualities of a clear-sighted realism, a high conception of human possibilities, and an instinct for the symbolic implications of particular settings. Larry McMurtry, they say, occasionally shows up at writers' conferences wearing a T-shirt that says, "Minor Texas Regional Novelist." Surely if a T-shirt can be said to be ironic, that one is: not a straight self-evaluation but a twinkle-eyed allusion to the tension between local elements and broader concerns in his Texas novels. There is a similar tension in the work of contemporary Illinois writers: William Maxwell, Mark Costello, Harry Mark Petrakis, Dave Etter, Michael Anania, Saul Bellow,

They transcend regionalism and local color while remaining, in the fullest sense, Illinois writers.

To suggest how this could be, I would like to match Birkbeck's and Flower's books, from the first age of Illinois writing, and Lindsay's poem, from the second, with one work from contemporary Illinois writing: Hilary Masters' *Last Stands: Notes from Memory*, published in 1982. I intend a sort of paradoxical symmetry in choosing this book from all the possibilities. Like Birkbeck's *Notes* and Flower's *History*, at the dawn of Illinois literature, *Last Stands* is, from one point of view, not a work of art at all but a work of fact, a memoir like those earlier books, "Notes from Memory." And so it is squarely in the tradition of Illinois writing that has shattered traditional ideas of genre to find new ways of capturing American experience. Also like Birkbeck's and Flower's books, *Last Stands* is not by a native Illinoisan; in fact, Hilary Masters was born in Kansas City and has lived most of his life in upstate New York. Nor does much of the book take place in Illinois; it is centered on the two poles of Kansas City, where Hilary lived with his grandparents, and New York, where his parents lived.

And yet *Last Stands* is very much an Illinois book, perhaps a second-generation Illinois book, since it draws its depths and energy from an examination and a reconsideration of Edgar Lee Masters and the Spoon River mythology. It is the memories of Masters' youngest son, Hilary, and its central action is his attempt to come to terms with his father's memory. The book is full of restless movement: "Going from Kansas City to New York and then to New Hampshire and then back to New York. Going to North Carolina and then back to New York and then to Philadelphia. Going from Philadelphia to Providence, then back to Springfield, to Petersburg. Going from one place to another." But the emotional core of the book is Petersburg, and a central scene is a comic and yet heartbreaking account of the funeral of Edgar Lee Masters there in 1950. To understand and to forgive his father, Hilary realizes, he must understand Petersburg; he must find "a channel into the landlocked memory" of his father's boyhood in Illinois.

But *Last Stands* is not only, or even primarily, about Edgar Lee Masters. Hilary Masters can come to terms with his father's memory by placing him in juxtaposition with the three other major figures in his childhood: his grandparents Tom and Mollie Coyne and his mother Ellen Coyne Masters, Edgar Lee Masters' second wife, thirty years younger than he. They are all tragicomic figures: the old soldier Tom Coyne living on memories of his career in the U.S. Cavalry and as a railroad builder in South America; Mollie Coyne trying to maintain a home in a house run like an army fort, finding some fulfillment in Kansas City politics, and finally giving up for

good and turning her face to the wall after a minor accident; and Ellen Masters, endlessly resourceful in improvising communities around her family, as she improvises kitchens in furnished rooms out of stacks of hotplates. They are all making "last stands," in the metaphor Hilary Masters draws from his grandfather's preoccupation with Custer. He had too much to forgive his parents and grandparents for, but finally he can achieve understanding and "make no judgment."

Where do we put *Last Stands* on the shelf? With autobiographies? With "non-fiction novels"? With prose poems? The best place, I think, is with earlier works of Illinois literature that have looked straight at reality, that have preserved through adversity a lofty sense of what Saul Bellow calls "the main human enterprise," and that have touched our physical surroundings with imagination. We can salute Morris Birkbeck, George Flower, Vachel Lindsay, Hilary Masters, and scores of other fine Illinois writers with a breezy, affectionate "Greetings, fellow suckers!" and know exactly what we mean.

What's Left To Be Rediscovered?*

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One of the best ways to find out how much you don't know is to write a book and let your readers tell you. In the fall of 1982 I had the good fortune to publish with the University of Illinois Press a volume called *Rediscoveries: Literature and Place in Illinois*. And ever since then—at conferences, through reviews and correspondence, even in the course of casual conversations—readers have been advising me of aspects of the Illinois literary heritage I never knew existed. Perhaps typical of such advice is this from a half-friendly reviewer writing in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*. After duly noting the absence from *Rediscoveries* of Illinois' first published novel and earlier volume of verse, the reviewer commented that such "obscure titles would seem to be appropriate for a book that seeks to dust off important, neglected literary works."

Appropriate indeed. I have subsequently taken a peek at the verse of William Leggett (Edwardsville, 1822) and am convinced that his only literary virtue is being first. As for the "first novel written in the state," *Early Engagements* (Cincinnati, 1854), well, I can only say it's now on my list of Illinois books to be read. Yet, early Illinois imprints notwithstanding, *Rediscoveries* was not written as a compendium. It treats some few representative texts in detail, mentions a number more. The point was to favor a selection of literature (mostly novels) with an ample reading—works that I judged to have been *wrongly* neglected, such as Joseph Kirkland's important and entertaining novel *Zury* (1887). *Zury* is a notable instance of a readable book on a subject of genuine significance to Illinois (the romance of pioneering but, according to Kirkland, "realistically" treated) that has unaccountably dropped out of our cultural and historical consciousness. Oh, it's been kept alive in a custodial sort of way, receiving mentions under the rubric of "regionalism" in the comprehensive critical and historical surveys of American literature. But a niche in the bibliographies doesn't mean that Kirkland's chief work is much read. On the contrary, this sort of museum-display approach just about

* An essay version of a talk given at the first Illinois Literary Heritage Conference held in Springfield in November 1985.

guarantees that the literature of 19th century Illinois won't be read—except, of course, for the rare classic like *Spoon River Anthology*, which is kept alive in the classroom and in the Illinois mythology.

In the end, a *readership* was what I wanted for books like *Zury*. While no credit was due for "rediscovering" the books themselves—if nothing else the titles have never been lost—I did try to rediscover what they were about, how good they were as literature. In short, I read them. And as I read I asked myself whether there might be a classic "Illinois canon" sitting undisturbed on dusty library shelves, or hidden in the back corners of used and rare bookstores, or boxed up for the next garage sale. Could I do my little part to bring to light a worthy literary heritage that would give us—citizens and scholars alike—something more to talk about than Abraham Lincoln and the aforementioned *Spoon River*?

This was not a rhetorical question when I began reading for *Rediscoveries*, though it assuredly is now. For a couple of reasons, not all states have a distinctive literary heritage, by which I mean imaginative works written over time, consonant in matter and theme, which form a "usable past" for each new generation of writers and readers. *States*, we need to remember, are nothing more than culturally arbitrary geopolitical inventions: we don't feel any different when we cross the border between Illinois and Indiana, even when we're invited to sense the Hoosier vibrations by a welcoming sign. It's the *region* that has a cultural authenticity shared by both states—and others across the "Midwest," which is itself an abstraction, empty as a social institution perhaps but far more palpably real as culture than a "state." Nor is the criterion for a distinctive state literature to be found in "great historical events," for every state has had its share of these, including even my much despised home state of Kansas. Kansas, so far as I can determine, utterly lacks a literary heritage in the sense I've been characterizing it, despite boasting powerful individual works and quantities of writing, old and new, about "bleeding Kansas" in the 1850s.

I cannot precisely say what constitutes a literary heritage, and the *why* of the matter—why we have one and Kansas doesn't—is much beyond my ability to answer. Yet I suspect it has everything to do with myth. In Illinois we have a myth that takes like a child's smallpox vaccination: an original infection that scars; a scar that grows and itches to remind us of a virulent past that is never wholly out of the blood generations later. In Illinois we imagine that our place has universal importance in its very particularity. "Things" happened "here"—in Chicago, in Springfield, in "Egypt"—that have left

their mark of innoculation. And we not only feel their vestige, we *recognize* what happened as history's version of what is. Consider but one example of handing down a myth, this from this life of a truly gigantic Illinoisan, Peter Cartwright. In Cartwright's *Autobiography* (1857) there is a delightful narrative nugget about a confrontation between the irrepressible preacher and Andrew Jackson. A service in Nashville in 1819 was unsettled by the appearance of the Hero of New Orleans, who, coming in late and not finding a seat, proceeded to lean against a post and listen to the exhortation. "Just then," Cartwright says,

> I felt some one pull my coat into the stand, and turning my head, my fastidious preacher whispering a little loud, said: "General Jackson has come in; General Jackson has come in." I felt a flash of indignation run all over me like an electric shock, and facing about to my congregation, and purposely speaking out audibly, I said, "Who is General Jackson? If he don't get his soul converted, God will damn him as quick as he would a Guinea negro!"

Here are two of the 19th century American West's larger-than-life figures rubbing elbows (and rubbing each other the wrong way)—and to hear Cartwright tell it the tale is more than a little like a frontier brag. Jackson, of course, went on to become the quintessential western democrat and president of the United States. But what became of Peter Cartwright, who mastered General Jackson just as he mastered everyone else he came up against? Today, I suspect, few of us could say. But throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th Americans knew about Peter Cartwright. I have found this incident from the *Autobiography* repeated and embellished in two later pieces of Illinois literature, Francis Grierson's *The Valley of Shadows* (1909) and Harold Sinclair's *American Years* (1938). Grierson and Sinclair didn't have any compelling need for the vignette in their respective plots; they're simply reacting to Cartwright's indomitable spirit and in the process perpetuating the myth. Cartwright was local color, to be sure, and useful in any Illinois context. But he was more.

In *Rediscoveries* I devote several pages to *The Valley of Shadows*, which I think is one of the untarnishable literary treasures of our state. And I include a note on Sinclair's *American Years*. But, to my chagrin, I missed their common ancestor, Cartwright's *Autobiography*, which is like writing a commentary on the Gospels without having heard of Mark! The *Autobiography* is the mythic "Ur-text" for a century of subsequent writing, with both man and his work remaining vital to Illinois literature today. One of our finest contemporary poets, John Knoepfle, has written poetry based on the

Autobiography, and I am aware of two recent plays (both produced) that have Cartwright as their central character. So why the general unfamiliarity? It may sound absurd, but maybe we can blame it on Lincoln, whose pervasive mythic presence in Illinois (no debunking here!) has obscured all his peers (except perhaps for Stephen Douglas—and we all know what the Lincoln myth as done to *him!*). Cartwright, too, has suffered from this "Lincoln effect." In the 1840s Peter Cartwright was *better known both in Illinois and across America* than Abraham Lincoln. He was the principal hero of Methodism's age of saints on the western frontier, a successful politician in the Illinois legislature, a founder of towns and colleges, and an incomparable preacher wherever he went—and he went everywhere. As one newspaper put it in an 1870 retrospective, Cartwright was "greater than the king," by which I assume they meant not greater than Christ but greater than the established political and churchly authority: Cartwright never became a bishop in the Methodist church, and Lincoln defeated him in a contest for the U.S. House. Yet, the article suggests, who did more for the culture, Bishop Whosit or Peter Cartwright? Abraham Lincoln or Peter Cartwright?

I realize the "blasphemy" in the question, but how interesting that it could be seriously raised in 1870. Not that this is an argument for reading the *Autobiography* today: the book must speak for itself, independently of dubious contemporary testimonials. And so it does. For me the *Autobiography* ia a fine work, firmly in the tradition of Benjamin Franklin and other unselfconscious American success stories. But you must judge for yourselves. Find a copy (which shouldn't be too hard, since it was an enormously popular book in its day, widely circulated throughout the Methodist Book Concern), open it at random, and read a page or two. I'd be surprised if you stopped very soon. The *Autobiography* may lack conventional literary finish, but Cartwright had, like his vernacular descendent Mark Twain, one of America's most inventive memories and the voice to go with it. The book was written while he was in semi-retirement at Pleasant Plains, intended, as its author says, to set the record straight: that is, to supplant the popular Cartwright mythology with something from the horses' mouth. The result was a testament even more relentlessly mythic—and one of the few Illinois books that belongs to the nation.

Dwelling thus on a single volume of relatively unfamiliar autobiography should indicate that I think we've undervalued the patch-quilt of first-person non-fiction narratives about the settlement of Illinois—travel accounts, immigrant guides, diaries and journals, and (for lack of a better term) autobiographical romances. In an age of novel-reading we can reach back into the literary past

for kindred texts, cousins many times removed though they may be. And we'll read a bit of poetry, provided it's brought to our attention in an anthology and doesn't tax us with topicality or modernism. For instance, we have the competence to read the 1930s Sangamon Valley poems of "H." recently rediscovered by John Hallwas and published by Spoon River Poetry Press, or Dennis Camps's new edition of Vachel Lindsay (also from Spoon River). And, as practiced readers of fiction, we've the curiosity to wade through even so egregious a novel as Clark Kerr's *The Illini*. But we don't really know how to approach the various kinds of non-fiction prose that were so prolifically written (and so popular received) between 1820 and the Civil War. This was the first literature of Illinois, the literature that made the rest. Yet faced with a book like Eliza Farnham's *Life in Prarie Land* (1946), seemingly so formless and "all over the place," we are likely to give in to a temptation to "piece" on it—a passage here, a chapter there, but no reading straight through and consequently no sense of the work as a whole.

This is precisely what has happened to Farnham and others over the years. Every so often an anthology will pick up a pungent chapter on frontier manners from *Life in Prarie Land* or a rattling good pioneer adventure—say a prairie fire or an Indian escapade—from another eyewitness narrative. Then for the life of the anthology these bits have to stand for their entire books, which, however good the extracts, is a literary disgrace. I would argue that there are important reasons *not* to anthologize but to reprint wholly. First, books obviously are wholes and the tendency to violate their integrity is the lowest form of a "social studies" approach to literature. But in the case of books like Farnham's *Life in Prairie Land*, Christiana Holmes Tillson's *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois* (1872), or Rebecca Burlend's *A True Picture of Emigration* (1848), an even better reason comes to mind: these books are informed by women's voices and we need—especially now—to hear them uninterrupted.

Of course women's pioneering stories give a different perspective on the westering experience. How could it be otherwise? But the formal role of *voice* goes much deeper than perspective. Farnham is preoccupied with the romantic western landscape, Tillson with frontier manners, Burlend with the vexing difficulties of emigration. Yet all three writers use women's work, women's place, and women's consciousness to make narratives of impressive authority—narratives that, even as they pay their respects to the western vastness, turn inward to a private work of critical feeling: not only what they did on the Illinois frontier but what it was like and, therefore, what it meant.

If this sounds similar to what went on with women's fiction in the 1970s, then I've made my point. The great silence concerning the

emotions of pioneering—especially anxiety, which seems to have been constant and deep-seated—is broken, and we are able to see the adventure as *more* heroic rather than less. Stories of pioneer women are more heroic because more human: there was more to be transcended than nature and the empty land. I wish there were space here for large quotation, enough to characterize voice and suggest form. But once again I must ask you to take my word until you can find the books themselves (this time the quest will be hard: of the three, only *Life in Prairie Land* is in print—a library edition—and *A Women's Story* and A True Picture have been unavailable since they were reprinted in the Lakeside Classics series in 1919 and 1936 respectfully). To read them you'll have to pester your local library for an inter-library loan or visit a university research library—and even then you may not find all three.

I have chosen to talk about these three works in particular because I believe they are "Illinois classics" that have been overlooked and deserve much wider reading and discussion. There are many authors in this "first-person non-fiction" category, to be sure, all waiting to be rediscovered, and I don't mean to imply that all the worthy ones were written by women. Yet in the main these books *were* the province of women: in 19th century America women *could* write, both in the sense of being able to do so and being sanctioned to do so by society. Farnham's book, in fact, has enough sentimental and romantic fictionalizing in it to qualify the author as one of Hawthorne's "damn'd tribe of scribbling women.'" Yet I don't think that even such a discontented belles-lettrist as Hawthorne could object to Farnham's *authenticity*, that quality of having been there—been there and left, it's important to add. For all three women got part of their perspective on Illinois pioneerism by leaving the state and returning to civilization: Farnham to New York, Tillson to Massachusetts, and Burlend to Yorkshire in England.

The books are no less "Illinois" for the author's having left, however. Their years in Illinois were a lifetime because they were the right years to be here. Looking back, Christiana Tillson tended to be satiric about the "Suckers" she encountered (to her mind, only southerners were "Suckers," never Illinoisans from New England stock); Rebecca Burlend was even more severe about the country and its folk. And both women are convincing in the indictments. Yet after all it is neither Tillson's human comedy nor Burlend's bleak agragarian prospect that holds us the longest. In the end we want to listen to Eliza Farnham's prophetic vision of Illinois:

> But we are departing from prarie land! The bright waters of Lake Michigan dance around our steamer. Blue and dim in the

> distance, fades the mellow-tinted shore, its long faint outline trembling in the golden haze of Indian summer! Farewell! land of majestic rivers and flowering plains—of fearful storm and genial sunshine—of strong life and glowing beauty! Glorious in thy youth—great in thy maturity—mighty in thy age—thou shalt yet rival the eastern lands of heroism and song, in the worship and affection of man! Thy free plains and far-reaching streams shall be the theatre of a power and intelligence never yet witnessed! Thy countless acres shall glow with checkered beauty and hum with busy life, when the generations of those who love thee now, sleep in thy peaceful bosom! Land of the silent past and stirring future, farewell!

Did this Illinois apocalypse come to pass? Well, yes and no. Our acres do indeed "glow with checkered beauty and hum with busy life," but these days they are hardly "countless." And, in an ironic inversion of Farnham, we now tend to think of Illinois as the land of a stirring past and a silent future. In a sense the myth of a heroic past has been too persistent, our own recent history too anxious to let us do otherwise. I speak personally here. For me, ultimately, Farnham's "prairie land," though an imaginary and mythic place, is the only kind of Illinois worth possessing. And this is the crucial importance of Illinois literature—or the literature of any place you happen to live. So what's left out there to rediscover? In a country of the mind there are always "countless acres" for "the theatre of a power and intelligence never yet witnessed." And I hope I've suggested how many literary ghost towns still await our rehabilitation in the vast imaginary country called Illinois.

Topics for Future Issues

WINTER 1985	**Contemporary Literature** Deadline: October 31st, 1984.)
SPRING 1985	**Writing Assignments Based on Literary Works** Deadline: Feb. 28, 1985
FALL 1985	**Teaching Thinking Through Writing** Deadline: June 30, 1985
WINTER 1986	**The English Teacher's Other Duties** Deadline: October 31, 1985
SPRING 1986	**The Computer and English Teaching** Deadline: Feb. 28, 1985

Manuscripts should be sent in duplicate to Dorothy Matthews, 208 English Building, University of Illinois, 608 S. Wright, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

WANTED: Critical articles, book reviews, bibliographies of criticism and ideas for classroom use of Illinois authors—especially the writers for young adults: Richard Peck, Irene Hunt, Barbara Wersba and Lynn Hall. Send to above address.

CALL FOR STUDENT WRITING FROM ALL LEVELS FOR IATE'S BEST ILLINOIS POETRY AND PROSE CONTEST

DEADLINE: January 31, 1985.

FORMAT: Typed copy is preferred.
8½ x 11 paper is mandatory (one side only)
Copy must be clear, legible and carefully proofread.

LABELLING: Each entry must be accompanied by its own cover sheet, stapled to the entry, which states:

- Full name of student
- Student's grade at time piece was composed
- Full name of school
- School's complete mailing address
- Full name of teacher (indicate if IATE member)

IMPORTANT: The student's name, the school's name, and the teacher's name must not appear anywhere else.

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ENTRIES: Each teacher is limited to no more than:
- Five (5) pieces of prose
- Ten (10) poems

LENGTH: Prose entries (both expository essays and short stories) should be no more than 1,000 words.

MAILING

Send **prose** to: Beth Stiffler, Department of English and Journalism, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Il. 61455.

Send **poetry** to: Janice Neulieb, Department of English, Stevenson Hall, Illinois State University, Normal, Il. 61761.

Send all manuscripts by first-class mail.

REQUIRED ENCLOSURE:

When submitting manuscripts, include a signed statement to read:

To the best of my knowledge the enclosed manuscripts were written by the students whose names they bear. I have submitted work by the following: (Give complete list of students represented)

Doe, John	"Sunrise" (poem)	7th
(name)	(title)	(grade)

_____

_____

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(Teacher's Signature)

MANUSCRIPTS MUST BE SENT FIRST-CLASS
POSTMARK NO LATER THAN JANUARY 31, 1985
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